UNEXPLORED SPAIN

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UNEXPLORED SPAIN

ABEL CHAPMAN'S WORKS

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H.M. King Alfonso XIII spearing a boar.

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BY

ABEL CHAPMAN

AUTHOR OF 'WILD SPAIN,' 'WILD NORWAY,' 'ON SAFARI,' ETC.

AND

WALTER J. BUCK

HONORARY VICE-CONSUL AT JEREZ

AUTHOR OF 'WILD SPAIN'

WITH 250 ILLUSTRATIONS BY
JOSEPH CRAWHALL, F. CALDWELL, AND ABEL CHAPMAN
AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1910

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INSCRIBED

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TO THEIR MAJESTIES

KING ALFONSO XIII.

HIMSELF AN ACCOMPLISHED SPORTSMAN

AND

QUEEN VICTORIA EUGENIA OF SPAIN

WITH DEEP RESPECT

BY THEIR MAJESTIES' GRATEFUL AND DEVOTED SERVANTS

THE AUTHORS

Preface

The undertaking of a sequel to *Wild Spain*, we are warned, is dangerous. The implication gratifies, but the forecast alarms not. Admittedly, in the first instance, we occupied a virgin field, and naturally the almost boyish enthusiasm that characterised the earlier book—and probably assured its success—has in some degree abated. But it's not all gone yet; and any such lack is compensated by longer experience (an aggregate, between us, of eighty years) of a land we love, and the sounder appreciation that arises therefrom. Our own resources, moreover, have been supplemented and reinforced by friends in Spain who represent the fountain-heads of special knowledge in that country.

No foreigners could have enjoyed greater opportunity, and we have done our best to exploit the advantage—so far, at least, as steady plodding work will avail; for we have spent more than two years in analysing, checking and sorting, selecting and eliminating from voluminous notes accumulated during forty years. The concentrated result represents, we are convinced, an accurate—though not, of course, a complete—exposition of the wild-life of one of the wildest of European countries.

No, for this book and its thoroughness neither doubt nor fear intrudes; but we admit to being, in two respects, out of touch with modern treatment of natural-history subjects. Possibly we are wrong in both; but it has not yet been demonstrated, by Euclid or other, that a minority even of two is necessarily so? Nature it is nowadays customary to portray in somewhat lurid and sensational colours—presumably to humour a "popular taste." Reflection might suggest that nothing in Nature is, in fact, sensational, loud, or extravagant; but the lay public possess no such technical training as would enable

them to discern the line where Nature stops and where fraud and "faking" begin. At any rate we frequently read purring approval of what appears to us meretricious imposture, and see writers lauded as constellations whom we should condemn as charlatans. Beyond the Atlantic President Roosevelt (as he then was) went bald-headed for the "Nature-fakers," and in America the reader has been put upon his guard. If he still likes "sensations"—well, that's what he likes. But he buys such fiction forewarned.

In the illustration of wild-life our views are also, in some degree, divergent from current ideas. Animal-photography has developed with such giant strides and has taught us such valuable lessons (for which none are more grateful than the Authors), that there is danger of coming to regard it, not as a means to an end but as the actual end itself. While photography promises uses the value of which it would be difficult to exaggerate, yet it has defects and limitations which should not be ignored. First as regards animals in motion; the camera sees too quick—so infinitely quicker than the human eye that attitudes and effects are portrayed which we do not, and cannot see. Witness a photograph of the finish for the Derby. Galloping horses do not figure so on the human retina—with all four legs jammed beneath the body like a dead beetle. No doubt the camera exhibits an unseen phase in the actual action and so reveals its process: but that phase is not what mortals see. Similarly with birds in flight, the human eye only catches the form during the instantaneous arrest of the wing at the end of each stroke—in many cases not even so much as that. But the camera snaps the whirling pinion at mid-stroke or at any intermediate point. The result is altogether admirable as an exposition of the mechanical processes of flight; but it fails as an illustration, inasmuch as it illustrates a pose which Nature has expressly concealed from our view.

Secondly, in relation to still life. Here the camera is not only too quick, but too faithful. A tiny ruffled plume, a feather caught up by the breeze with the momentary shadow it casts, even an intrusive bough or blade of grass—all are repro-

duced with such rigid faithfulness and conspicuous effect that what are in fact merest minute details assume a wholly false proportion, mislead the eye, and disguise the whole picture. True, these things are actually there; but the human eye enjoys a faculty (which the camera does not) of selecting its objective and ignoring, or reducing to its correct relative value each extrinsic detail; of looking, as it were, through obstacles and concentrating its power upon the one main subject of study.

The portrayal of wildfowl presents a peculiar difficulty. This group differs in two essential characters from the rest of the bird-world. Though clad in feathers, yet those feathers are not "feathery." Rather may they be described as a steely water-tight encasement, as distinct from the covering, say of game-birds as mackintosh differs from satin. Each plume possesses a compactness of web and firmness of texture that combine to produce a rigidity, and this, it so happens, both in form and colour. For in this group the colours, too, or patterns of colour, are clean-cut, the contrasts strong and sharply defined. The plumage of wildfowl, in short, is characterised by lack of subdued tints and half-tones. That is its beauty and its glory; but the fact presents a stumbling-block to treatment, especially in colour.

The difficulty follows consequentially. Subjects of such character and crude coloration defy accustomed methods. That is not the fault of the artist; rather it reveals the limitations of Art. Just as in landscape distance ever demands an "atmosphere" more or less obliterative of distinctive detail afar (though such detail may be visible to non-artistic eyesight miles away), so in birds of sharply contrasted colouring the needed effect can only (it would appear) be attained by processes of softening which are not, in fact, correct, and which ruin the real picture as designed by Nature.

No wild bird (and wildfowl least of all) can be portrayed from captive specimens—still less from bedraggled corpses selected in Leadenhall market. In the latter every essential feature has disappeared. The ruffled remains resemble the beauty of their originals only as a dish-clout may recall some previous existence

as a damask serviette. Living captives at least give form: but that is all. The loss of freedom, with all its contingent perils, involves the loss of character, the pride of life, and of independence. Once remove the first essential element—the sense of instant danger, with all that the stress and exigencies of wild-life import—and with these there vanish vigilance, carriage, sprightliness, dignity, sometimes even self-respect.

Not a man who has watched and studied wild beasts and wild birds in their native haunts, glorified and ennobled by self-conscious aptitude to prevail in the ceaseless "struggle for existence," but instantly recognises with a pang the different demeanour of the same creatures in captivity, albeit carefully tended in the best zoological gardens of the world.

To Mr. Joseph Crawhall (cousin of one author) we and our readers are indebted for a series of drawings that speak for themselves.

Further, we desire most heartily to thank H.R.H. the Duke of Orleans for notes and photographs illustrative both of Baetican scenery and of the wild camels of the marisma; also the many Spanish and Anglo-Spanish friends whose assistance is specifically acknowledged, *passim*, in the text.

Should some slight slip or repetition have escaped the final revision, may we crave indulgence of critics? 'Tis not care that lacks, but sheer mnemonics. In a work of (we are told) 150,000 words the mass of manuscript appals, and to detect every single error may well prove beyond our power. We have lost, moreover, that guiding eye and pilot-like touch on the helm that helped to steer our earlier venture through the shoals and seething whirlpools that ever beset voyages into the unknown.

A. C.
W. J. B.

British Vice-Consulate, Jerez,
December 1910.

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CHAPTER I

UNEXPLORED SPAIN

INTRODUCTORY

THE Spain that we love and of which we write is not the Spain of tourist or globe-trotter. These hold main routes, the high-ways from city to city; few so much as venture upon the bye-ways. Our Spain begins where bye-ways end. We write of her pathless solitudes, of desolate steppe and prairie, of marsh and mountain-land—of her majestic sierras, some well-nigh inaccessible, and, in many an instance, untrodden by British foot save our own. Lonely scenes these, yet glorified by primeval beauty and wealth of wild-life. As naturalists—that is, merely as born lovers of all that is wild, and big, and pristine—we thank the guiding destiny that early directed our steps towards a land that is probably the wildest and certainly the least known of all in Europe—a land worthy of better cicerones than ourselves.

Do not let us appear to disparage the other Spain. The tourist enjoys another land overflowing with historic and artistic interest—with memorials of mediæval romance, and of stirring times when wave after wave of successive conquest swept the Peninsula. Such subjects, however, fall wholly outside the province of this book: nor do they lack historians a thousand-fold better qualified to tell their tale.

The first cause that differentiates Spain from other European countries of equal area is her high general elevation. This fact must jump to the eye of every observant traveller who books his seat by the Sûd-express to the Mediterranean. Better still, for our purpose, let him commence his journey, say at the Tweed. From Berwick southwards through the heart of England to London: from London to Paris, and right across France—all the

way he traverses low-lying levels; fat pastures, fertile and tilled to the last acre. His aneroid tells him he has seldom risen above sea-level by more than a few hundred feet; and never once has his train passed through mountains—hardly even through hills; he can scarce be said to have had a real mountain within the range of his vision in all these 1200 miles.

Now he crosses the Bidassoa . . . the whole world changes! At once his train plunges into interminable Pyrenees, and ere it clears these, he has ascended to a permanent highland level—a tawny treeless steppe that averages 2000-feet altitude, and sometimes approaches 3000, traversed by range after range of rugged mountains that arise all around him to four, five, or six thousand feet. Railways, moreover, avoid mountains (so far as they can). Our traveller, therefore, must bear in mind that what he actually sees is but the mildest and tamest version of Spanish sierras. There are bits here and there that he may have thought anything but tame—only tame by comparison with those grander scenes to which we propose guiding him.

For the next 500 miles he never quits that austere highland altitude nor ever quite loses sight of jagged peaks that pierce the skies—peaks of that hoary cinder-grey that shows up almost white against an azure background. Never does he descend till, after leaving behind him three kingdoms—Arragon, Navarre, and Castile—his train plunges through the Sierra Moréna, down the gorges of Despeñaperros, and at length on the third day enters upon the smiling lowlands of Andalucia. Here the aneroid rises once more to rational readings, and fertile *vegas* spread away to the horizon. But our traveller is not even now quite clear of mountains. Whether he be booked to Malaga or to Algeciras, he will presently find himself enveloped once more amidst some fairly stupendous rocks—the Gaëtánes or Serranía de Ronda respectively.

Spain is, in fact, largely an elevated table-land, 400 miles square, and traversed by four main mountain-ranges, all (like her great rivers) running east and west. The only considerable areas of lowland are found in Andalucia and Valencia.

Naturally such physical features result in marked variations of climate and scene, which in turn react upon their productions and denizens, whether human or of savage breed. We take three examples.

The central table-lands, subject all summer to solar rays that

burn, in winter shelterless from biting blasts off snow-clad sierras, present precisely that landscape of desperate desolation that always results from a maximum of sunshine combined with a minimum of rainfall. A desiccated downland, khaki-colour or calcareous by turn, but bare (save for a few weeks in spring) of green thing, naked of bush or shrub, innocent even of grass.

TYPES OF SPANISH BIRD-LIFE

LAMMERGEYER (*Gypaëtus barbatus*)

Whose home is in the wildest sierras—a weird dragon-like bird-form ; expanse, 9 feet. [Formerly reputed to carry off *babies* to its eyrie.]

Not a tree grows so far as eye can reach, not a watercourse but is stone-dry and leaves the impress that it has been so since time began. Oh, it is an unlovely landscape, that central plateau. 'Twere ungrateful, nevertheless (and unjust too), to forget that here we are journeying in a glory of atmosphere, brilliant in aggressive radiance that annihilates distance and revels in space. Though patches of vine-growth be lost in the monotony of tawny expanse, mud-built hamlet and village church indistinguishable

amidst a universal khaki, yet this is, in truth, a kingdom of the sun. The great bustard maintains a foothold on these arid uplands, but the fauna is best exemplified by the desert-loving sand-grouse (*Pterocles arenarius*).

Precisely the reverse of all this is Cantabria—the Basque provinces of the north, with Galicia and the Asturias. There, bordering on the Biscayan Sea, you find a region absolutely Scandinavian in type—pinnacled peaks, precipitous beyond all rivals even in Spain, with deep-rifted valleys between, rushing salmon-rivers and mountain-torrents abounding in trout. Here the fauna is alpine, if not subarctic, and includes the brown bear and chamois, the ptarmigan, hazel-grouse, and capercaillie.

Cantabria is a region of rock, snow, and mist-wraith; of birch and pine-forest—the very antithesis of the third region, that next concerns us, the smiling plains of Andalucia and Valencia nestling on Mediterranean shore. Here for eight months out of the twelve one lives in a paradise; but the summer is African in its burden of heat and discomfort. Every green thing outside the vineyard and irrigated garden is burnt up by a fiery sun, a sun that changes not, but, day following day, grips the land in a blistering embrace. Climatic conditions such as these reacting on a race already infused with Arab blood naturally conduce to Oriental modes of life. Yet even here we have examples of the curious contradictions that characterise this *pays de l'impréve.* Thus within sight of one another, there flourish on the *vega* below the date-palm and sugar-cane, while the ice-defying edelweiss embellishes the snows above—arctic and tropic in one.

Such extremes of climate react, as suggested, upon the character of the human inhabitants of a land which includes within its boundaries nearly all the physical conditions of Europe and North Africa. From the north, as might be expected, comes the worker—the sturdy laborious Galician, disdained and despised by his Andalucian brother, regarded as lacking in dignity—the very name *Gallego* is a term of reproach. But he is a happy and contented hewer of wood and drawer of water, that Gallego: throughout Spain he carries the baskets, bears the burdens, cleans the floors; and finally returns, a rich man, to his barren hills of Galicia.

The Andalucian will condescend to tend your cattle or garden,

to drive your horses or ponies: and such offices he will perform well; but anything menial, or what he might regard as derogatory, he prefers—instinctively, not offensively—to leave to the Galician. From Castile and Navarre comes a different caste, stately and aristocratic by nature, yet with fiery temperament concealed beneath subdued exterior—honestly, we prefer both the preceding exemplars. The Catalan comes next, pushing and effervescent, all for his own little corner, his factories and his trade—impregnated, every man, with a sort of cinematograph of advanced views on social and political questions of the day—borrowed mostly from his up-to-date neighbours beyond the Pyrenees, yet grafted on to old-world *fueros*, or franchises, that date back to the times of the Counts of Barcelona.[1] Perhaps the most perfect example of contemporary natural nobility is afforded by the peasant-proprietor of pastoral León; then there is the Basque of Biscay, Tartar-sprung or Turanian, Finnic, or surviving aboriginal—let philologists decide. Among Spain's manifold human types, we suggest to ethnologists (and suggested before, twenty years ago) the study of a surviving remnant that still clings secreted, lonely as lepers, in the far-away mountains of Northern Estremadura—the Hurdes. These wild tribes of unknown origin (presumed to be Gothic) live apart from Spain, four thousand of them, a root-grubbing race of *homo sylvestris*, squatted in a land without written history or record, where all is traditional even to the holding of the soil. Not a title-deed or other document exists; yet this is a region of considerable extent—say fifty miles by thirty. A recent pilgrimage to these forgotten glens enables us to give, in another chapter, some contemporary facts about "Las Hurdes."

Throughout Spain the people of the "lower orders"—the peasantry—strike those who leave the beaten tracks by their independence and manly bearing. North or south, east or west, an infinite variety of races differing in habit and character, even in tongue, yet all agreeing in their solid manliness, in straightforward honesty, in what the Romans entitled *virtus*—fine types save where contaminated by *empléomania*, call that "officialdom" (one of the twin curses of Spain). Largely there exists here ground-work for the rebuilding of Spanish greatness—such a land

[1] Catalonia was a separate State, under independent rulers, the Counts of Barcelona, until A.D. 1131, when it was merged in the Kingdom of Arragon.

awaits but the wand of a magician to recall its people to front rank. Neither by despotic methods nor by the power that is only demonstrated by violence will the change be brought about, but by the enlightenment that has learnt to leave unimitated the follies of the past, and unused the forces of coercion.

Such a leader, we believe, to-day wields that wand. May he be spared to restore the destinies of his country.

It was in Spain, remember, that, more than 2000 years ago, the fate of Carthage and, later, that of Rome was decided. To the latter Imperial city Spain had given poets, philosophers, and emperors. It was in Spain that there dawned the earlier glimmerings of popular liberties, as such are now understood. Self-government with municipal rights were recognised by the Cortes of León previous to our Magna Charta. Individual guarantees, freedom of person and contract, and the inviolability of the home were granted by the Cortes of Zaragoza in 1348—more than three centuries before our Habeas Corpus was signed in 1679. A land with such traditions and achievements, with its twenty millions of inhabitants, cannot long be held back outside the trend of liberal expansion.

The pursuit of game, alike with other aspects of Spanish things, is not exempt from startling surprises. A ramble through the cistus-scrub, with no more exciting object than shooting a few redlegs, may result in bagging a lynx; or a handful of snipe from some cane-brake be augmented by the addition of a wild-boar. It is not that game abounds, but that the country is wide and wild, abandoned to natural state and combining conditions congenial to animal-life. Of the big-game that is obtained or of its habitats, there is no approximate estimate, nor do precise knowledge or records exist. Each village in the sierra or higher mountain-region lives its own life apart. Communication with other places is rare and difficult, nor is it sought. One must go oneself to the spot to ascertain with any sort of accuracy what game has been, or may be obtained thereat. This means finding out every fact at first-hand, for no reliance can be placed on reports or hearsay evidence. Nor does this remark apply to game alone: it applies universally in wilder Spain. The Englishman straying in these lone scenes finds himself amongst a kindly but independent people where sympathy and a knowledge of the language carry him further

than money. Where all are *Caballeros*, neither titles nor wealth impress or subdue. The wanderer is free to join his new-made friends in the chase, taking equal chance with keen sportsmen and on terms of equality. He will find his nationality a passport to their liking, and soon discover that Arab hospitality has left an abiding impress in these wild regions; as, indeed, Moorish domination has done on every Spanish thing.

That last sentence sums up an ever-present and essential factor. In any description of this country, however superficial, this Oriental heritage must always be borne in mind as an influence of first importance. Previous to the Arab inrush, Spain had enjoyed practically no organic national existence. The Peninsula was occupied by a cluster of separate kingdoms, not united nor even homogeneous, and usually one or another at war with its neighbour. Neither Roman nor Goth had fused the Spanish races into a concrete whole during their eight centuries of overlordship.

Types of Spanish Bird-Life
WOODCHAT SHRIKE (*Lanius pomeranus*)

In A.D. 711 occurred a decisive day. Then, on Guadalete's plain, below the walls of Jerez, that impetuous Arab chieftain Tarik overthrew the Gothic King Roderick and with him the power of Spain. Like an overwhelming flood, the Arabs swept across the land. Within two years (by 713) the insignia of the Crescent floated above every castle and tower, and Moslem rule was absolute throughout the country—excepting only in the wild northern mountains of Asturias, whence the tenacity of the mountaineers, guided by the genius of Pelayo, flung back the tide of war.

Spanish history for the next seven centuries (711–1492) records "Moorish domination." Now history, as such, lies outside our scope; but we become concerned where Arab systems, and their methods of colonisation, have altered the face of the earth and left enduring marks on wilder Spain. And we may,

beyond that, be allowed to interpolate a remark or two in elucidation of what sometimes appear popular misconceptions on these and subsequent events. Thus, during the period denominated "domination," the Arab conquerors enjoyed no peaceful or undisputed possession. During all those centuries there continued one long succession of wars—intermittent attempts, successful and the reverse, at reconquest by the Christian power. Here a patch of ground, a city, or a province was regained; presently, perhaps, to be lost a second or a third time. Never for long was there a final acceptance of the major force. But during the interludes, the periods of rest between struggles, the two contending races lived in more or less friendly intercourse, exchanging courtesies and even maintaining a stout rivalry in those warlike forms of sport which in mediæval times formed but a substitute for war. It was thence that the custom of bull-fighting took its rise. If not fighting Arabs, fight bulls, and so prepare for the more strenuous contest. Such conditions could not but have tended towards greater coherence among the various elements on the Christian side, except for the incessant internecine rivalries between the Christians themselves. A Spanish knight or knight would invoke the aid of his nation's foe to consolidate or establish his own petty estate. Christians with Moslem auxiliaries fought Moslems reinforced by Christian renegades.

The Moorish invader had to fight for his possession—every yard of it. Yet despite that, this energetic race found time to colonise, to develop and enrich the subjugated region with a thoroughness the evidence of which faces us to-day. We do not refer to their cities or to such monuments in stone as the Mezquita or Alhambra, but to their introduction into rural Spain of much of what to-day constitutes chief sources of the country's wealth, and which might have been enormously increased had Moorish methods been followed up. The Koran expressly ordains and directs the introduction of all available fruits or plants suitable to soil that came, or comes, under Moslem dominion. "The man who plants or sows the seed of anything which, with the fruit thereof, gives sustenance to man, bird or beast does an action as commendable as charity"—so wrote one of their philosophers. "He who builds a house and plants trees and who oppresses no one, nor lacks justice, will receive abundant reward from the Almighty." There you have the religion both of the good man

and the good colonist. These precepts the Moors habitually and energetically carried out to the letter. Arboriculture was universal: the provinces of Valencia, Cordoba, and Toledo they filled with trees—fruit-trees and timber. In the warm valleys of the coast and in the sheltered glens of the mountains they acclimatised exotic fruits, plants, and vegetables hitherto restricted to the more benign climes of the East or to Afric's scorching

Types of Spanish Bird-Life

GRIFFON VULTURE (*Gyps fulvus*)

Abounds all over Spain: sketched while drying his wings after a thunderstorm, in the Sierra de San Cristobal, Jerez.

strand. Sugar-cane flourished in such luxuriance as to leave available a heavy margin for export. The fig-tree and carob, quince and date-palm, the cotton-plant and orange, with other aromatic and medicinal herbs, together with aloes and the anachronous-looking prickly-pear (*Cactus*), its amorphous lobes reminiscent of the Pleistocene, were all brought over for the use and benefit, the delight and profit of Europe. Of these, the orange to-day forms one of Spain's most valuable exports, representing some three millions sterling per annum.

Silk and its manufacture represented another immense source

of wealth and industry introduced into Spain—to-day extinct. The Moors covered Andalucia with mulberry-groves: in Granada alone ran 5000 looms for the weaving of the fibre, and the streets of the Zacatin and the Alcarceria became world-markets, where every variety of costly stuffs were bought and sold—tafetans, velvets, and richest textures that surpassed in quality and brilliancy of tint even the far-famed products of Piza, Florence, and the Levantine cities which since Roman days had monopolised the silk-supply of the world. These now found their wares displaced by Spanish silks; even the sumptuous "creations" of Persia and China met with a dangerous rivalry.

Such was the technical skill and success of the Moors in agriculture and acclimatisation that, on the eventual conquest and final expulsion of their race from Spain, overtures were made with a view of inducing a certain proportion to remain, lest Spain might lose every expert she possessed in these essential pursuits. Six families in every hundred were promised amnesty on condition of remaining, but none accepted the offer. Deep as was their love for Spain—so deep that the departing Moors are related to have knelt and kissed its strand ere embarking, broken hearted, for Africa—yet not a man of them but refused to remain as vassals where, for centuries, they had lived as lords.

Such were the Moors—strong in war, yet equally strong in all the arts and enterprises of peace, filled with energy, an industrious and a practical race. It is safe to say that under their regime the resources of this difficult land were being developed to their utmost capacity.[1]

Of the final expulsion of the Moors (and that of the Jews was analogous) 'tis not for us to write. Yet, for Spain, both events proved momentous, and, along with the antecedent practices of the Moriscos, provide side-lights on history that are worth consideration.[2]

[1] The term "Moor" has always seemed to us a trifle unfortunate, as tending to indicate that the conquering race came from Morocco—"Turks" or "Arabs" would have been a more appropriate title. For fifty years after the conquest Spain was governed by Emirs subject to the Kaliphs of Damascus, the first independent power being wielded by the Emir Abderahman III. who, in 777, usurped the title of Kaliph of Cordoba. That kaliphate, by the way, during its earlier splendours, became the centre of universal culture, Cordoba being the intellectual capital of the world, with a population that has been stated at two millions.

[2] For the information of readers who have not studied the subject, it may be well to add that, during the early years of the seventeenth century, something like a million of Spanish Moors—the most industrious of its inhabitants—were either massacred in Spain or expelled from the country.

The subjoined statistics give the state of Spanish agriculture at the present day, the total acreage being taken as 50,451,688 hectares ($2\frac{1}{2}$ acres each) :—

		Hectares.
Cultivated		21,702,880
Uncultivated :—		
Pasture, scrub, and wood	24,055,547	
Unproductive	4,693,261	
Total		28,748,808
Grand Total		50,451,688

These figures demonstrate precisely the extent of the authors' condominium in Spain—well over one-half the country! With the area under cultivation (say 43 per cent), we have but one concern—the Great Bustard. The remaining 57 per cent pertain absolutely to our province—Wilder Spain. The term scrub or brushwood (in Spanish *monte*), though by a sort of courtesy it may be ranked as "pasture"—and parts of it do support herds of sheep and goats—implies as a rule the wildest of rough covert and jungle, rougher far than a Scottish deer-forest; and this *monte* clothes well-nigh one-half of Spain.

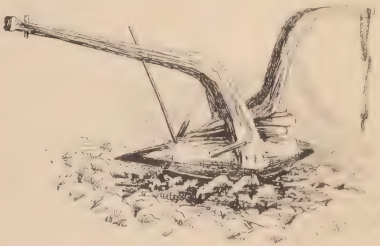
Such figures may appear to infer considerable apathy and lack of effort as regards agriculture. 'Twere, nevertheless, a false assumption to conclude that Spanish mountaineers are an idle race—quite the reverse, as is repeatedly demonstrated in this book. In the hills every acre of available soil is utilised, often at what appears excessive labour—maybe it is a patch so tiny as hardly to seem worth the tilling, or so terribly steep that none save a *serrano* could keep a foothold, much less plough, sow, and reap.

The main explanation of the immense percentage of waste lies in the fact first set forth—the high general elevation of Spain; and, secondly, in her mountainous character.

Whether these or any other extenuating circumstances apply to the corn-lands, we are not sufficiently expert in such subjects as to express a confident opinion. But we think not. So antiquated, wasteful, and utterly inefficient have been Spanish methods of agriculture, that a land which might be one of the granaries of Europe is actually to some extent dependent on foreign grain, and that despite an import-duty! A distinct movement is, nevertheless, perceptible in the direction of

employing modern agricultural machinery, chemical manures, and such-like. Irrigation in a land whose head-waters can be tapped at 2000 feet and upwards could be carried out on a larger scale and at cheaper rates than in any other European country—yet it is practically neglected; no considerable extension has been made to the two million acres of irrigated lands that existed when we last wrote, twenty years ago, although the ruined aqueducts of Roman, Goth, and Moor are ever present to suggest the silent lesson of former foresight and prosperity.

One incidental circumstance of rural Spain, the fatal effects of which are all-penetrating (though it will never be altered), is



WOODEN PLOUGH-SHARE

(As still commonly used.)

absenteeism on the part of landowners. Not even a tenant-farmer will live on his holding. No, he must have his town-house, and employ an administrator or agent to superintend the farm, only visiting it himself at rare intervals. Oh! that hideous nightmare, the hireling, how his dead-weight of apathy and dishonesty at secondhand crushes out every spark of interest and enterprise, and breeds in their stead a rampant crop of all the petty vices and frauds that prey on industry. But that evil can hardly be eradicated.

What we British understand by the expression "country life" totally fails to commend itself to the more gregarious peoples of the south. Rich and poor alike, from grandee to day-labourer, the Spanish ignore and disdain the joys of the country. They call it the *campo* and the *campo* they detest. Each nightfall

must see every man of them, irrespective of class, assembled within the walls of their beloved town or city, irresistibly attracted to street-girt abode—be it humblest cot or sumptuous palace (and one stands next door to the other). Even suburban existence is eschewed. There are no outer fringes to a Spanish town. No straggling "villa residences," no Laburnum Lodge or River-View "ornament" the extramural solitude. Back at dusk all hie, crowding to the *paséo*, to club or casino, to social gathering and games of chance or (more rarely) of skill. That ubiquitous term "*animacion*," which may be translated gossip, chatter, light-hearted intercourse, fulfils the ideals of life. Its more serious side—reading, study, scientific pursuit—have little place; seldom does one see a library in any Spanish home, urban or rural.

None can accuse the authors of desiring to use a comparison (proverbially odious) to the detriment of our Spanish friends. The above is merely a record of patent facts that must quickly become obvious to the least observant. It is but a definition of divergent idiosyncrasies as between different human genera. And remember that we in England have recently been told that our rural system is fraught with unseen and unsuspected evil. Into those wider questions we have no intention of entering. But at least our impressions are based upon personal experience of both lines of life, while much of the vituperation recently poured upon rural England is derived from a view of but one, and not a very clear view at that.

Where the owner—big or little, but the more of them the better—lives on the land, that land and the country at large benefit to a degree that is demonstrated with singular clearness by seeing the converse system as it is practised in Spain to-day. Here no one, owner or tenant—still less the hireling—takes any living interest (to say nothing of pride) in his possession or occupation beyond that very short-sighted "interest" of squeezing the utmost out of it from day to day. Ancient forests are cut down and burnt into charcoal, and rarely a tree replanted or a thought given to the resulting effects on rainfall or climate. As to beauty of landscape—what matter such æsthetic notions when the owner lives a hundred miles away? The collateral fact that, to a great extent, nature's beauty and nature's gifts are analogous and interdependent is ignored. Such simple issues are too

insignificant, and too little understood, for frothy rhetoricians to reflect upon: the latter, moreover, like Gallio (and Pontius Pilate) care for none of these things.

A characteristic that differentiates the Spaniard, north or south, from other (more modern) nationalities, is a comparative indifference in money matters. Now a Spaniard requires money for his daily needs as much as the others; yet he never sinks to the level of total absorption in his pursuit of the dollar. Put that down to apathy, if you will—or to pride; at least there is

Types of Spanish Bird-Life

CETTI'S WARBLER (*Sylvia cetti*)

A winter songster, abundant but rarely seen, skulking in densest brakes.

dignity in the attribute. The leading Spanish newspapers quote the various market fluctuations and changes in value from day to day. Sometimes, possibly, the report may read *sin operaciones*, but never will you see conspicuously protruded, as a main item in the morning's news, the headline "Wall Street." There is (or was) dignity in commerce, and there may yet be readers in England who silently wish that such matters were relegated to their proper position—the monetary columns.

The chief financial flutter that interests is the Government lottery which is held every fortnight, and at which all classes lose their money; but the National Treasury profits to the tune

of three millions sterling yearly. Spain is the home of "chance": that element appeals to Spanish character. Thus in bull-fighting (the one popular pastime) the name applied to each of its formulated exploits is *suerte*—chance.

Spain is frequently accused of being a land of *mañana*. Hardly can we call to mind a book on the country in which some play on that word does not figure. But procrastination is not confined to any one country, and in this case the accusers are quite as likely to be guilty as the accused. A characteristic that strikes us as more applicable is rather the reverse—that of taking no thought for the morrow. Let us take an example or two. It is not the custom to repair roads. When, from long use, a road has gradually passed from bad to worse, till at length it has virtually ceased to exist, then it is "reconstruction" that is the remedy. Annual repairs, one may presume, would cost, say half the amount, would preserve continuous utility, and avoid that slowly aggravated destruction that ends finally in a hiatus. But that is not the Spanish way. "Reconstruction" is preferred. The ruthless cutting down of her forests without replanting a single tree has already been quoted. Next take an example or two of the things that lie most directly under the authors' special view, such as game. The ibex—a unique asset, restricted to Spain, and of which any other country would be proud—has been callously shot down without thought for to-morrow, extirpated for ever in a dozen of its former habitats. The redleg—under the murderous system of shooting, year in and year out, over decoy-birds—would be exterminated within three or four years in any other country save this. It is merely the incredible fecundity of the bird and the vast area of waste lands that preserves the breed. Partridge in Spain are like rabbits in Australia—indestructible. The trout affords another example. Everywhere else on earth the trout is prized as one of nature's valued gifts—hard to over-appreciate. Fully one-half of Spain is expressly adapted to its requirements. Trout were intended by nature to abound over the northern half of Spain—say down to the latitude of Madrid, and even in the extreme south where conditions are favourable, as in the Sierra Nevada. Trout might abound in Spain to the full as they abound in Scotland or Norway, adding value to every river and

a grace to country life. But what is the treatment meted out to the trout in Spain? No sooner is its presence detected than the whole stock—big and little alike, even the spawn—is blown out of existence with dynamite, poisoned by quicklime, or captured wholesale (regardless of season or condition) in nets, cruives, funnel-traps, and every other abomination. Kill and eat, big or little, breeding female or immature—it matters not;

Types of Spanish Bird-Life

DARTFORD WARBLER (*Sylvia undata*)

Resident. Frequents deep furze-coverts, seldom seen (as we are constrained to represent it) in separate outline.

kill all you can to-day and leave the morrow to itself. True, there are game-laws and close-seasons, but none observe them.[1]

We have selected these examples because we know and can speak with absolute authority. Presumption and analogy will naturally suggest that the same intelligence, the same blind improvidence will apply equally in other and far more important matters. Not one of our Spanish friends with whom we have discussed these subjects time and again but agrees to the letter with the above conclusions and most bitterly regrets them.

[1] At a big hotel the *menu* on May 26 included (as usual) "partridges." We emphasised a mild protest by refusing to eat them; but the landlord scored with both barrels. On opening our luncheon-basket next day (we had a twelve-hours' railway journey), there were the rejected redlegs! We had to eat them then—or starve!

CHAPTER II

UNEXPLORED SPAIN (*Continued*)

ON TRAVEL AND OTHER THINGS

Travel in all the wilder regions of Spain implies the saddle. Our Spain begins, as premised, where roads end. For us railways exist merely to help us one degree nearer to the final plunge into the unknown; and not railways only, but roads and bridges soon "petter out" into trackless waste, and leave the explorer face to face with open wilds—*despoblados*, that is, uninhabited regions—with a route-map in his pocket that is quite unreliable, and a trusty local guide who is just the reverse.

Types of Spanish Bird-Life

FANTAIL WARBLER (*Cisticola cursitans*)

Resident: builds a deep purse-like nest supported on long grass or rushes.

Riding light, with the "irreducible minimum" stowed in the saddle-bags, one may traverse Spain from end to end. But it is only a hasty and superficial view that is thus obtainable, and except for those who love roughing it for roughness' sake, even the freedom of the saddle presents grave drawbacks in a land where none live in the country and none travel off stated tracks. In the *campo*, nothing—neither food for man nor beast—can be obtained, and no provision exists for travellers where travellers never come. The little

rural hostelry of northern lands has no place; there is instead a *venta* or *posada* which may too often be likened to a stable for beasts with an extra stall for their riders. It is a characteristic of pastoral countries everywhere that their rude inhabitants discriminate little between the needs of man and beast.

But even towns of quite considerable size—when far removed from the track—are totally devoid of inns in our sense. Inns are not needed. The few Spanish travellers who, greatly daring, venture so far afield, usually bespeak beforehand the hospitality of some local friend or acquaintance.

Types of Spanish Bird-Life

ROCK-THRUSH (*Petrocincla saxatilis*)

A beautiful spring-migrant to the highest sierras. Colours of male: opal, orange, and black, with a white "mirror" in centre of back. Female, yellow-brown barred with black.

Incidentally it may be added that a visit to one of these out-of-the-world cities—asleep most of them for the last few centuries—is a pleasing and restful change amidst the racket of exploration. One breathes a mediæval atmosphere and marvels at the revelation, enjoying prehistoric peeps in lost cities replete for the antiquary with historic memorial and long-forgotten lore. No one cares.

Yet in those bygone days of Spain's world-power these somnolent spots produced the right stuff,—a minority, no doubt, belonged to the type satirised by Cervantes,—but many more strong in mind as in muscle, who went forth, knights-errant, Paladins and Crusaders, to conquer and to shape the course of history. Is the old spirit extinct? Our own impression is that the material is there all right ready to spring to life like the

stones of Deucalion, so soon as Spain shall have shaken off her incubus of lethargy and the tyranny that clogs the wheels of progress. Nor need the interval be long.

That sound human material continues to exist in rural Spain we have had recent evidence during the calling-out of levies of young troops ordered abroad to serve their country in Morocco. None could witness the entrainment at some remote station of a detachment of these fine lads without being struck by their bearing, their set purpose, and above all their patriotism. With such material, with a well cared-for, contented, and loyal army and a broadening of view, wisely graduated but equally resolute, Spain moves forward. Alfonso XIII. is a soldier first—No! Above that he is a king by nature, but his care for his army and its well-being has already borne fruits that are making and will make for the honour, safety, and advancement of his country.

To resume our interrupted note on travel: whether you are riding across bush-clad hills, over far-spread prairie, or through the defiles of the sierra, as shadows lengthen the problem of a night's lodging obtrudes. There is a variety of solutions. At a pinch—as when belated or benighted—one may, in desperate resort, seek shelter in a *choza*. Now a *choza* is the reed-thatched hut which forms the rural peasant's lonely home. Assuredly you will be made welcome, and that with a grace and a courtesy—aye, a courtliness—that characterises even the humblest in Spain. The best there is will be at your disposal; yet—if permissible to say so in face of such splendid hospitality (and in the hope that these good leather-clad friends of ours may not read this book)—the open air is preferable. There exists in a *choza* absolutely no accommodation—not a separate room; a low settee running round the interior, or a withy frame, forms the bed; those kindly folk live all together, along with their domestic animals—and pigs are reckoned such in Spain. Let us gratefully pay this due tribute to our peasant friends—but let us sleep outside.

At each village will usually be found a *posada*. These differ in degree, mostly from bad downwards. The lowlier sort—little better than the *choza*—is but a long, low, one-storeyed barn which you share with fellow-wayfarers, and your own and their

beasts, or any others that may come in, barely separated by a thatched partition that is neither noise-proof nor scent-proof. We can call instances to mind when even that small luxury was lacking, and all, human and other, shared alike. There are no windows—merely wooden hatches. If shut, both light and air are excluded; if open, hens, dogs, and cats will enter with the dawn—the former to finish what remains of supper. The cats will at least disperse the regiment of rats which, during the night, have scurried across your sleeping form.

Here we relate, as a specific example, a night we spent this last spring in northern Estremadura:—

Owing to a miscalculation of distance, it was an hour after

A VILLAGE *POSADA*

sundown ere we reached our destination, a lonely hamlet among the hills. Our good little Galician ponies were dead-beat, for we had been in the saddle since 5 A.M., and it was past eight ere we toiled up that last steep, rock-terraced slope. We were a party of three, with a local guide and our own Sancho Panza—faithful companion, friend, and servant of many years' standing. At a dilapidated hovel, the last in the village and perched on a crag, we drew rein, and after repeated knocks the door was opened by a girl—she had set down a five-year-old child among the donkeys while she drew the bolt, the ground-floor being (as usual) a stable. To our inquiry as to food—and the hunger of the lost was upon us—our hostess merely shrugged her shoulders, and with an expressive gesture of open hands, answered "Nada"—nothing! Sancho, however, was equal to the occasion. Within two minutes,

while we yet stood disconsolate, he returned with a cackling cockerel in his arms. "Stew him quick before he crows," he adjured the girl, and turned to unload the ponies.

What an age a cockerel takes to cook! It was midnight ere he smoked on the board and, hunger satisfied, we could turn in. In an upper den were two alcoves with beds, or rather stone ledges, ordinarily used by the family, and which were assigned to us, the luckless No. 3 by lot having to make shift (in preference to sleeping on a filthy floor) with three cranky tables of varying heights, and whose united lengths proved a foot too short at either end!

Oh, the joy of the morning's dawn and delicious freshness of the mountain air, as we turned out at five o'clock for yet another ten-league spell to our next destination. Two nights later we slept in the gilded luxury of Madrid! But how we abused our previous neglect in not having brought a camp-outfit.

The above, however, presents the gloomier side of the picture, and there is a reverse, even in *posadas*. We cannot better describe the latter side than in our own words from *Wild Spain*:—

A Night at a *Posada* (Andalucia)

The wayfarer has been travelling all day across the scrub-clad wastes, fragrant with rosemary and wild thyme, without perhaps seeing a human being beyond a stray shepherd or a band of nomad gypsies encamped amidst the green palmettos. Towards night he reaches some small village where he seeks the rude *posada*. He sees his horse provided with a good feed of barley and as much broken straw as he can eat. He is himself regaled with one dish—probably the *olla* or a *guiso* (stew) of kid, either of them, as a rule, of a rich red-brick hue, from the colour of the red pepper or capsicum in the *chorizo* or sausage, which is an important (and potent) component of most Spanish dishes. The steaming *olla* will presently be set on a table before the large wood-fire, and with the best of crisp white bread and wine, the traveller enjoys his meal in company with any other guest that may have arrived at the time—be he muleteer or hidalgo. What a fund of information may be picked up during that promiscuous supper! There will be the housewife, the barber, and the padre of the village, perhaps a goatherd come down from the mountains, a muleteer, and a charcoal-burner or two, each ready to tell his own tale, or to enter into friendly discussion with the "Ingles." Then, as you light your *breva*, a note or two struck on the guitar falls on ears predisposed to be pleased.

How well one knows those first few opening notes: no occasion to ask that it may go on: it will all come in time, and one knows there is a merry evening in prospect. One by one the villagers drop in, and an ever-widening circle is formed around the open hearth, rows of children collect, even the dogs draw around to look on. The player and the company gradually warm up till couplet after couplet of pathetic *malagueñas* follow in quick succession. These songs are generally topical, and almost always extempore; and as most Spaniards can—or rather are anxious to—sing, one enjoys many verses that are very prettily as well as wittily conceived.

But girls must dance, and find no difficulty in getting partners to join them. The *malagueñas* cease, and one or perhaps two couples stand up, and a pretty sight they afford! Seldom does one see girl-faces so full of fun and so supremely happy as they adjust the castanets, and one damsel steps aside to whisper something sly to a sister or friend. And now the dance begins; observe there is no slurring or attempt to save themselves in any movement. Each step and figure is carefully executed, but with easy, spontaneous grace and precision both by the girl and her partner.

Though two or more pairs may be dancing at once, each is quite independent of the others, and only dance to themselves; nor do the partners ever touch each other.[1] The steps are difficult and somewhat intricate, and there is plenty of scope for individual skill, though grace of movement and supple pliancy of limb and body are almost universal, and are strong points in dancing both the *fandango* and *minuet*. Presently the climax of the dance approaches. The notes of the guitar grow faster and faster; the man—a stalwart shepherd-lad—leaps and bounds around his pirouetting partner, and the steps, though still well ordered and in time, grow so fast that one can hardly follow their movements.

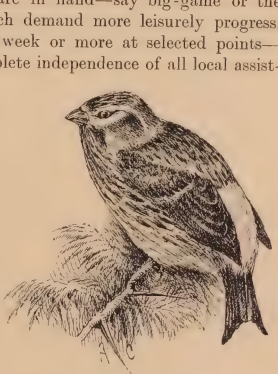
Now others rise and take the places of the first dancers, and so the evening passes; perhaps a few glasses of *aguardiente* are handed round—certainly much tobacco is smoked—the older folks keep time to the music with hand-clapping, and all is good nature and merriment.

What is it that makes the recollection of such evenings so pleasant? Is it merely the fascinating simplicity and freedom of the dance, or the spectacle of those weird, picturesque groups, bronze-visaged men and dark-eyed maidens, all lit up by the blaze of the great wood-fire on the hearth, and low-burning oil-lamps suspended from the rafters? Perhaps it is only the remembrance of many happy evenings spent among these people since our boyhood. This we can truly say, that when at last you turn in to sleep you feel happy and secure among a peasantry with whom politeness and sympathy are the only passports required to secure to you

[1] We have seen an exception to this in the mountain villages of the Castiles, where on *fiesta* nights a sort of rude valse is danced in the open street.

both friendship and protection if required. Nor is there a pleasanter means of forming acquaintance with Spanish country life and customs than a few evenings spent thus at a farm-house or village inn in any retired district of laughter-loving Andalucia.

For rough living we are of course prepared, and accept the necessity without demur or second thought while travelling. But when more serious objects are in hand—say big-game or the study of nature, objects which demand more leisurely progress, or actually encamping for a week or more at selected points—then we prefer to assure complete independence of all local assistance and shelter.



Types of Spanish Bird-Life

SERIN (*Serinus hortulanus*)

A true European canary, but its song is harsh and hissing.

An expedition on this scale involves an amount of care and forethought that only those who have experienced it would credit. For in Spain it is an unknown undertaking, and to engineer something new is always difficult. Quite an extensive camping-trip can be organised in Africa, where the system is understood, with less than a hundredth part of the care needed for a comparatively short trip in Spain where it is not. The necessary bulk of camp-outfit and equipment requires a considerable cavalcade, and this mule-transport (since no provender is obtainable in the country) involves carrying along all the food for the animals—the heaviest item of all. Naturally the cost of such expeditions works out to nearly double that of simple riding.

But, after all, it is worth it! Compare some of the miseries we have above but lightly touched upon—the dirt and squalor, the nameless horrors of *choza* or *posada*—with the sense of joyous exhilaration felt when encamped by the banks of some babbling trout-stream or in the glorious freedom of the open hill. Casting back in mental reverie over a lengthening vista of years, we certainly count as among the happiest days of life those spent

thus under canvas—whether on the sierras and marismas of Spain, on high fjeld or dark forest in Scandinavia, or on Afric's blazing veld.

Should some remarks (here or elsewhere in this book) appear self-contradictory the reason will be found rather in our inadequate expression than in any confusion of idea. We love Spain primarily because she is wild and waste; but, loving her, are naturally desirous that she should advance to that position among nations that is her due. Such material development, nevertheless, need not—and will not—imply the total destruction of her wild beauties. Development on those lines would not consist with the peculiar genius of the Spanish race, and, while we trust the development will come, we fear no such collateral results. Take, for instance, the corn-lands. There the great bustard is alike the index and the price of vast, unwieldy farms unfenced and but half tilled, remote from rail, road, or market. That condition we neither expect nor hope to see exchanged for smug fields with a network of railways. For "three acres and a cow" is not the line of Spanish regeneration; it is rather a claptrap catch-word of politicians—a murrain on the lot of them!

True, the plan seems to answer in Denmark, and if the Danes are satisfied, well and good—that is no business of ours. But no such mathematical and Procrustean restriction of vital energies and ambitions will subserve our British race, nor the Spanish. In Spanish sierra may the howl of the wolf at dawn never be replaced by blast from factory siren, nor the curling blue smoke of the charcoal-burner in primeval forest be abolished in favour of black clouds belching from bristling chimneys that pierce a murky sky. Either in such circumstance would be misplaced.

Similarly, when the engineer shall have been turned loose in the Spanish marismas, he can, beyond all doubt, destroy them for ever. His straight lines and intersecting canals, hideous in utilitarian rectitude, would right soon demolish that glory of lonely desolation—those leagues of marshland, samphire, and glittering *lucio*. And all for nothing! Since the desecration will not "pay" financially—the reason we give in detail elsewhere—and you sacrifice for a shadow some of the grandest bits of wild nature that yet survive—the finest length and breadth of utter abandonment that still enrich a humdrum Europe. Should "progress" only advance on these lines no scrap of that continent

will be left to wanderer in the wilds—no spot where clanging skeins of wild-geese serry the skies, and the swish of ten thousand wigeon be heard overhead; or that marvellous iridescence—as of triple flame—the passing of a flight of flamingoes, be enjoyed.[1]

That national progress and development may come, for Spain's sake, we earnestly pray. But does there exist inherent reason why progress, in itself, should always come to ruin natural and racial beauties? Progress seems nowadays to be misunderstood as a synonym for uniformity—and uniformity to a single type. Disciples of the cult of insensate haste, of self-assertion and advertisement, have pretty well conquered the civilised world; but in Spain they find no foothold, and we glory to think they never will. Spain will never be "dragooned" into a servile uniformity. There remain many, among whom we count our humble selves, who bow no knee to the modern Baal, and who (while conceding to the "hustling" crowd not one iota of their pretensions to fuller efficiency in any shape or form) are proud to find fascination in simplicity, a solace in honest purpose and in old-world styles of life—right down (if you will) to its inertia.

Yes, may progress come, yet leave unchanged the innate courtesy, the dignity and independence of rural Spain—unspoilt her sierras and glorious heaths aromatic of myrtle and mimosa, alternating with natural woods of ilex and cork-oak—self-sown and park-like, carpeted between in spring-time with wondrous wealth of wild flowers. There is nothing incongruous in such aspiration. Incongruity rather comes in with misappreciation of the fitness of things, as when a coal-mine is planked down in the midst of sylvan beauties, to save some hypothetic penny-a-ton (as per Prospectus); where pellucid streams are polluted with chemical filth and vegetation blasted by noisome fumes; or where God's fairest landscapes are ruined by forests of hideous smoke-stacks.

If vandalisms such as these be progress then we prefer Spain as she is.

[1] By their peculiar style of aviation these birds, swaying up and down and swerving on zigzag courses, alternately expose a scintillating crimson mass suddenly flashing into a cloud of black and rosy white—according as their brilliant wing-plumage or their white bodies are presented to the eye. "A flame of fire" is the Arab signification of their name *flamenco*.

A Note on the Spanish Fauna

After all, it is less with the human element that this book is concerned than with the wild Fauna of Spain; a brief introductory notice thereof cannot, therefore, be omitted.

As head of the list must stand the Spanish Ibex (*Capra hispánica*), a game-animal of quite first rank, peculiar to the Iberian Peninsula, and whose nearest relative—the Bharal (*Capra cylindricornis*)—lives 2500 miles away in the far Caucasus. In Spain the ibex inhabits six great mountain-ranges, each covering

BONELLI'S EAGLE (*Aquila bonellii*)
A pair disturbed at their eyrie.

a vast area but all widely separated. After a crisis that five years ago threatened extermination, this grand species is now happily increasing under a measure of protection and the ægis of King Alfonso. Next—a notable neighbour of the ibex (and practically extinct in central Europe)—we place the lone and lordly Lammergeyer. A memorable spectacle it is to watch the huge *Gypaëtus* sweeping through space o'er glens and corries of the sierra in striking similitude to some weird flying dragon of Miocene age—a vision of blood-red irides set on a cruel head with bristly black beard, of hoary grey plumage and golden breast. Watch him for half an hour—for half a day—yet never will you discern a sign

of force exerted by those 3-yard pinions. With slightly reflexed wings he sinks 1000 feet; then, shifting course, rises 2000, 3000 feet till lost to sight over some appalling skyline. You have seen the long cuneate tail deflected ever so slightly—more gently than a well-handled helm—but the wide lavender wings remain rigid, not an effort that indicates force have you descried. Yet the power (so defined as "horse-power") required to raise a dead-

TYPES OF SPANISH BIRD-LIFE

BLACK VULTURE (*Vultur monachus*)

Nests in the mountain-forests of Central Spain, and winters in Andalucia. Sketched in Coto Doñana—"Getting under way."

weight of 20 lbs. through such altitudes can be calculated by engineers to a nicety—how is it exerted? That the power is there is conspicuous enough, and at least it serves to explain fabled traditions of giant lammergeyers hurling ibex-hunter from perilous hand-hold on the crag, to feast on the remains below; or, in idler moment, bearing off untended babes to their eyries—alas! that the duty of nature-students involves dissipating all such romance.

Spain, as geologically designed, being, as to one-half of her

superficies, either a desert wilderness or a mountain solitude, naturally lends congenial conditions of life to the predatory forms that rely on hooked bill, on tooth and claw, fang and talon, to ravage their more gentle neighbours. Savage raptores, furred and feathered, characterise her wilder scenes. Wherever one may travel, a day's ride will surely reveal huge vultures and eagles circling aloft, intent on blood. Throughout the wooded plains the majestic Imperial Eagle is overlord—you know him afar in sable uniform, offset by snow-white epaulets. Among the sierras a like condominium is shared by the Golden and Bonelli's

Types of Spanish Bird-Life

WHITE-FACED DUCK (*Erismatura leucocephala*)

Bill much dilated, waxy-blue in colour. Wings extremely short; a sheeny grebe-like plumage, and long stiff tail, often carried erect.

Eagles—and they have half-a-dozen rivals, to say nothing of lynxes and fierce wolves (we give a photo of one, the gape of whose jaws exceeds by one-half that of an African hyaena). Then there patrol the wastes a horde of savage night-rovers, denominated in Spanish *Alimañas*, to which a special chapter is devoted.

In Estremadura, where man is a negligible quantity, and along the wild wooded valley of the Tagus, roams the Fallow-deer in aboriginal purity of blood—whether any other European country can so claim it, the authors have been unable to ascertain. In Cantabria and the Pyrenees the Chamois abounds.

Of the big game (the list includes red, roe, and fallow-deer,

wild-boar, ibex, chamois, brown bear, etc.), we treat in full detail hereafter.

As regards winged game, this south-western corner of Europe is singularly weak. There exists but a single resident species of true game-bird—the redleg. Compare this with northern Europe, where, in a Scandinavian elk-forest, we have shot five kinds of grouse within five miles; while southwards, in Africa, francolins and guinea-fowl are counted in dozens of species. True, there are ptarmigan in the Pyrenees, capercaillie, hazel-grouse, and grey partridge in Cantabria, but all these are confined to the Biscayan area. Nor are we overlooking the grandest game-bird of all, the Great Bustard, chiefest ornament of Spanish steppe, and there are others—the lesser bustard, quail, sand-grouse, etc. —but these hardly fall within our definition. As for the teeming hosts of wildfowl and waterfowl that throng the Spanish marismas (some coming from Africa in spring, the bulk fleeing hither from the Arctic winter), all these are so fully treated elsewhere as to need no further notice here.

Spain boasts several distinct species peculiar to her limits. Among such (besides the ibex) are that curious amphibian, the Pyrenean musk-rat (*Myogale pyrenaica*), not again to be met with nearer than the eastern confines of Europe. Birds afford an even more striking instance. The Spanish azure-winged magpie (*Cyanopica cooki*) abounds in Castile, Estremadura, and the Sierra Moréna, but its like is seen nowhere else on earth till you reach China and Japan!

CHAPTER III

THE COTO DOÑANA: OUR HISTORIC HUNTING-GROUND

A Foreword by Sir Maurice de Bunsen, G.C.M.G., British Ambassador at Madrid.

Among my recollections of Spain none will be more vivid and delightful than those of my visits to the Coto Doñana. From beginning to end, climate, scenery, sport, and hospitable entertainment combine, in that happy region, to make the hours all too short for the joys they bring. Equipped with Paradox-gun or rifle, and some variety of ammunition, to suit the shifting requirements of deer and boar, lynx, partridge, wild-geese and ducks, snipe, rabbit and hare, nay, perhaps a chance shot at flamingo, vulture, or eagle, the favoured visitor steps from the Bonanza pier into the broad wherry waiting to carry him across the Guadalquivir, a few miles only from its outflow into the Atlantic. In its hold the first of many enticing *bocadillos* is spread before him. Table utensils are superfluous luxuries, but, armed with hunting blade and a formidable appetite, he plays havoc with the red mullet, *tortilla*, and *carne de membrillo*, washed down with a tumbler of sherry which has ripened through many a year in a not far distant *bodega*.

In half an hour he is in the saddle. Distances and sandy soil prohibit much walking in the Coto Doñana.

Marshalled by our host, the soul of the party, the cavalcade canters lightly up the sandy beach of the river. Thence it strikes to the left into the pine-coverts, leading in five hours more to the friendly roof of the "Palacio." A picturesque group it is with Vazquez, Caraballo, and other well-known figures in the van, packhorses loaded with luggage and implements of the chase, and lean, hungry *podencos* hunting hither and thither for a stray rabbit on the way. The views are not to be forgotten, the

Sand Waste in Coto Donana.

Landscape in Coto Doñana, with Marisma in background.

From photographs by H.R.H. Philippe, Duke of Orleans.

distant Ronda mountains seen through a framework of stone-pines, across seventy miles of sandy dunes, marismas, and intervening plains. After a couple of hours we skirt the famous sandhills, innocent of the slightest dash of green, which for some inscrutable reason attract, morning after morning, at the first tinge of dawn, countless greylag geese to their barren expanse and on which, *si Dios quiere*, toll shall be levied ere long. The marismas and long lagoons are covered here and there with

SPANISH IMPERIAL EAGLE

black patches crawling with myriads of waterfowl, to be described after supper by the careful Vazquez as *muy pocos, un salpicon*—a mere sprinkling. Their names and habits, are they not written, with the most competent of pens, in this very volume? We stop, perhaps, for a first deer-drive on our line of march. How thrilling that sudden rustle in the brushwood! Stag is it, or hind, or grisly porker? As we approach the "Palacio" we see the spreading oak on which perched, contemptuous and unsuspecting, the imperial eagle, honoured this year by a bullet from King Alfonso's unerring rifle. As we

ride through the scrub the whirr of the red-legged partridge sends an involuntary hand to the gun. They may await another day. At dusk we ride into the whitewashed *patio*, just in time to sally forth and get a flighting woodcock between gun and lingering glow of the setting sun.

For no precious hours are wasted in the Coto Doñana. Next day at early dawn, maybe, if the lagoon be our destination, or at any rate after a timely breakfast, off starts again the eager cavalcade, be it in quest of red deer or less noble quarry. Then all day in the saddle, from drive to drive, dismounting only to lie in wait for a stag, or trudge through the sage-bushes after partridge, or flounder through the boggy *soto*, beloved of snipe, with intervening oases for the unforgotten *bocadillo*.

If Vazquez be kind, he will take you one day to crouch with him behind his well-trained stalking-horse, drawing craftily nearer and nearer to where the duck sit thickest, till, straightening your aching back, you have leave to put in your two barrels, as Vazquez lays low some twenty couples with one booming shot from his four-bore, into the brown.

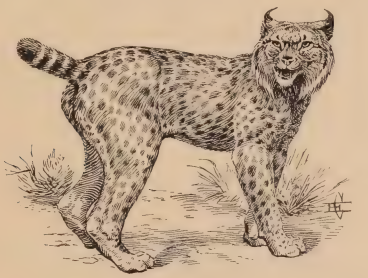
But one morning surely a visit must be paid to the sandhills. Caraballo will call you at 4 A.M., and soon after you will be jogging over the six or eight miles which separate the "Palacio" from that morning *rendezvous* of the greylag. The stars still shine brightly as you dismount at the foot of the long stretch of dunes. A few minutes' trudge will deposit you in a round hole dug deep in the dazzling white expanse the day before; for a hole too freshly dug will expose the damp brown sand from below, staining the spotless surface with a warning blotch, and causing the wary geese to swerve beyond the range of your No. 1 shot. It is still dark as you drop into your hole. Gradually the sky grows greyer and lighter, till the sun rises from the round yellow rim of the blue morning sky. Who shall describe the magic thrill of the first hoarse notes falling on your straining ear? The temptation to peep out is strong, but crouching deep down, you wait till the mighty pinions beat above you, and the first wedge of eight or ten sails grandly away in the morning sun. You judge them out of shot. But surely this second batch is lower down? Are they not close upon you? Why then no response to your two barrels? Was the emotion too great, or have you misjudged the speed of that easy flight or its distance

Egret-Heronry at Santolalla, Coto Doñana.

(The foreground is sand.)

From photographs by H.R.H. Philippe, Duke of Orleans.

through the crystal air? All the keener is the joy when, with heavy thump, your first goose is landed on the sand amid the tin decoys. When three or four lie there, Vazquez will send his fleet two-legged "water-dog" to set them up with twigs supporting their bills, to beguile more of their kind into line with the barrels. If the day be propitious, the sky will be dotted at times with geese in all directions. Now and again they will give you a shot, the expert taking surely three or four to the tyro's one. It is half-past eight, and you have sat in your hole close on two hours before Vazquez comes to gather the slain, to which he will add two or three more, marked down afar, and picked up as



SPANISH LYNX

dead as the rest. Never have two of your waking hours passed so quickly. What would you not give to live them over again and undo some of those inexplicable misses? But one goose alone would amply repay that early start. Even four or five are all you can carry, and the twenty or thirty that our expert [who must be nameless] would have shot, will live to stock the world afresh.

Among the fauna of the Coto Doñana, a word must be given to the lynx. Never can I forget sitting one afternoon, Paradox in hand, on the fringe of a covert. I was waiting for stag, rather drowsily, for the beat was a long one and the sun hot, when my eyes suddenly rested on a lynx standing broadside among the bushes, beyond a bare belt of sand, some fifty yards off. Fain would I have changed my bullet for slugs, but those

sharp ears would have detected the slightest click; so I loosed my bullet for what it was worth.

The lynx was gone. When the beat came at last to an end, I thought I would just have a look at his tracks. He lay stone-dead behind a bush, shot through the heart.

The eventful days are all too soon over. But the recollection remains of happy companionship and varying adventure, of easy intercourse between Spaniard and Englishman, with the echo of many a sporting tale, mingled with sage discourse from qualified lips on the habits of bird and beast. Who can tell you more about them than that group of true sportsmen and lovers of nature whose names, Garvey, Buck, Gonzalez, and Chapman, are indissolubly linked with the more modern history of the famous Coto Doñana?

MAURICE DE BUNSEN.

BRITISH EMBASSY, MADRID,
July 1910.

GREENSHANK (*Totanus canescens*)

CHAPTER IV

THE COTO DOÑANA

NOTES ON ITS PHYSICAL FORMATION, FAUNA, AND RED DEER

The great river Guadalquivir, dividing in its oblique course seawards into double channels and finally swerving, as though reluctant to lose all identity in the infinite Atlantic, practically cuts off from the Spanish mainland a triangular region, some forty miles of waste and wilderness, an isolated desert, singular as it is beautiful, which we now endeavour to describe. This, from our having for many years held the rights of chase, we can at least undertake with knowledge and affection.

Its precise geological formation 'twere beyond our power, unskilled in that science, to diagnose. But even to untaught eye, the existence of the whole area is obviously due to an age-long conflict waged between two Powers—the great river from within, the greater ocean without. The Guadalquivir, draining the distant mountains of Moréna and full 200 miles of intervening plain, rolls down a tawny flood charged with yellow mud till its colour resembles *café au lait*. Thus proceeds a ceaseless deposit of sediment upon the sea-bed; but the external Power forcibly opposes such infringement of its area. Here the elemental battle is joined. The river has so far prevailed as to have grabbed from the sea many hundred square miles of alluvial plain, that known as the marisma; but at this precise epoch, the Sea-Power appears to have called checkmate by interposing a vast barrier of sand along the whole battle-front. The net result

remains that to-day there is tacked on to the southernmost confines of Europe a singular exotic patch of African desert.

This sand-barrier, known as the Coto Doñana, occupies, together with its adjoining dunes on the west, upwards of forty miles of the Spanish coast-line, its maximum breadth reaching in places to eight or ten miles. The Coto Doñana is cut off from the mainland of Spain not only by the great river, but by the marisma—a watery wilderness wide enough to provide a home for wandering herds of wild camels. (See rough sketch-map above.)

Sand and sand alone constitutes the soil-substance of Doñana, overlying, presumably, the buried alluvia beneath. Yet a wondrous beauty and variety of landscape this desolate region affords. From the river's mouth forests of stone-pine extend unbroken league beyond league, hill and hollow glorious in deep-green foliage, while the forest-floor revels in wealth of aromatic shrubbery all lit up by chequered rays of dappled sunlight. Westward, beyond the pine-limit, stretch regions of Saharan barrenness where miles of glistening sand-wastes devoid of any vestige of vegetation dazzle one's sight—a glory of magnificent desolation, the splendour of sterility. To home-naturalists the scene may recall St. John's classic sandhills of Moray, but magnified out of recognition by the vastly greater scale, as befits their respective creators — in the one case the 100-league North Sea, here the 1000-league Atlantic. Rather would we compare these marram-tufted, wind-sculptured sand-wastes with the Red Sea litoral and the Egyptian Soudan, where Osman Digna led British troops memorable dances in the 'nineties —alike both in their physical aspect and in their climate, red-hot by day, yet apt to be deadly chilly after sundown. Resonant with the weird cry of the stone-curlew and the rhythmic roar of the Atlantic beyond, these seaward dunes are everywhere traced with infinite spoor of wild beasts, and dotted by the conical pitfalls dug by ant-lions (*Myrmeleon*).

Between these extremes of deep forest and barren dune are interposed intermediate regions partaking of the character of both. Here the intrusive pine projects forest-strips, called *Corrales*, as it were long oases of verdure, into the heart of the desert, hidden away between impending dunes which rear themselves as a mural menace on either hand, and towering above the

In Doñana.

summits of the tallest trees. Nor is the menace wholly hypothetic; for not seldom has the unstable element shifted bodily onwards to engulf in molecular ruin whole stretches of these isolated and enclosed *corrales*. Noble pines, already half submerged, struggle in death-grips with the treacherous foe; of others, already dead, naught save the topmost summits, sere and shrunk, protrude above that devouring smiling surface, beneath which, one assumes, there lie the skeletons of buried forests of a bygone age.

All along these lonely dunes there stand at regular intervals the grim old watch-towers of the Moors, reminiscent of half-forgotten times and of a vanished race. Arab telegraphy was neither wireless nor fireless when beacon-lights blazing out from tower to tower spread instant alarm from sea to sierra, seventy miles away.

In contrast with the scenery of both these zones, shows up the landscape of a third region, on the west—that of scrub. Here, one day later in geological sense, the eye roams over endless horizons of rolling grey-green brushwood, the chief component of which is cistus (*Helianthemum*), but interspersed in its moister dells with denser jungle of arbutus and lentisk, genista, tree-heath, and giant-heather, with wondrous variety of other shrubs; the whole studded and ornamented by groves of stately cork-oaks or single scattered trees. All these, with the ilex, being evergreen, one misses those ever-changing autumnal tints that glorify the "fall" in northern climes. Here only a sporadic splash of sere or yellow relieves the uniform verdure.

Obviously regions of such physical character can ill subserve any human purpose. As designed by nature, they afford but a home for wild beasts, fowls of the air, and other *ferae* which abound in striking and charming variety. For centuries the Coto Doñana formed, as the name imports, the hunting-ground of its lords, the Dukes of Medina Sidonia, and to not a few of the Spanish kings—from Phillip IV. in the early part of the seventeenth century (as recorded by the contemporary chronicler, Pedro Espinosa) to Alfonso XII. in 1882, and quite recently to H.M. Don Alfonso XIII. For five-and-twenty years the authors have been co-tenants, previously under the aforesaid ducal house; latterly under our old friend, the present owner.

The sparse population of Doñana includes a few herdsmen

(*vaqueros*) who tend the wild-bred cattle and horses that in semi-feral condition wander both in the regions of scrub and out in the open marisma. Nomadic charcoal-burners squat in the forests, shifting their reed-built wigwams (*chozas*) as the exigencies of work require; while the gathering of pine-cones yields a precarious living to a handful of *piñoneros*. Lastly, but most important to us, there are the guardas or keepers, keen-eyed, leather-clad, and sun-bronzed to the hue of Red Indians. There are a dozen of these wild men distributed at salient points of the Coto, most of them belonging to families which have held these posts, sons succeeding fathers, for generations. Of three such cycles we have ourselves already been witnesses.

Briefly to summarise a rich and heterogeneous fauna is not easy; a volume might be devoted to this region alone. Elsewhere in this book some few subjects are treated in detail. Here we merely attempt an outline sketch.

MARSH-HARRIER (*Circus aeruginosus*)

Throughout the winter (excepting only the wildfowl) there exists no such conspicuous ornithic display as appeals to casual eye or ear—those, say, of the average traveller. Ride far and wide through these wild landscapes in December or January, and you may wonder if their oft-boasted wealth of bird-life be not exaggerated. You see, perhaps, little beyond the ubiquitous birds-of-prey. These are ever the first feature to strike a stranger. Great eagles, soaring in eccentric circles, hunt the cistus-clad plain; the wild scream of the kite rings out above the pines, and shapely buzzards adorn some dead tree. Over rush-girt bogs soar weird marsh-harriers—three flaps and a drift as, with piercing sight, they scan each tuft and miss not so much as a frog or a wounded wigeon. All these and others of their race are naturally conspicuous. But, though unseen, there lurk all around other forms of equal beauty and interest, abundant enough, but secretive and apt to be overlooked save by closest scrutiny. That, how-

ever, is a characteristic of winter in all temperate lands. Birds at that season are apt to be silent and elusive, but their absence is apparent rather than real.

"SILENT SONGSTERS"

All around you, in fact, forest and jungle, scrub, sallow, and bramble-brake abound with minor bird-forms—with our British summer visitors, here settled down in their winter quarters; with charming exotic warblers and silent songsters—all off work for the season. Where nodding bulrush fringes quaking bog, or miles of tasselled cane-brakes border the marsh, there is the home of infinite feathered amphibians, crakes and rails, of reed-climbers and bush-skulkers, all for the nonce silent, shy, reclusive.

BLACKSTART (*Ruticilla titys*)
Abundant in winter; retires to the sierra to nest.

Their portraits, roughly caught during hours of patient waiting,

may be found (some of them) scattered through these chapters. But the present is not the place for detail.

The land-birds in winter you hardly see, for they "take cover."

Diametrically different—in cause and effect—is the case of wildfowl. These, by the essence of their natures and by their economic necessities, are always conspicuous, for they inhabit solely the open spaces of earth—the "spaces" that no longer exist at home: shallows, wastes, and tidal flats devoid of covert. Wildfowl, for that reason, have long learnt to discard all attempt at concealment, to rely for safety upon their own eyesight and incredible wildness. No illusory idea that security may be sought in covert abuses their keen and receptive instincts. Probably it never did. Nowadays, at any rate, they openly defy the human race with all its brain-begotten devices. There, in "waste places," wildfowl sit or fly—millions of them—conspicuous and audible so far as human sense of sight and sound can reach, and there bid defiance to us all. Much of these wastes are not (in the cant of a hypocritical age) "undeveloped," but rather, as means exist, incapable of development. Such spectacles of wild life as these Andalucian marismas to-day present are probably unsurpassed elsewhere in Europe—or possibly in the world. In foreground, background, and horizon both earth and sky are filled with teeming, living multitudes; while the shimmering grey monotony of the marisma, tessellated with its grey armies of the *Anatidae*, is everywhere brightened and adorned by rosy battalions of flamingoes. And out there, far beyond our visible horizon, there wander in that watery wilderness the wild camels, to which we devote a separate chapter.

Flamingoes ignore the limits of continents, and shift their mobile headquarters between Europe and Africa as the respective rainfall in either happens to suit their requirements. Hence, whether by day or night, the sight or sound of gabbling columns of flamingoes passing through the upper air is a characteristic of these lonely regions, irrespective of season. Cranes also in marshalled ranks, and storks, continually pass to and fro. The African coast, of course, lies well within their range of vision from the start.

Then as winter merges into spring—what time those clanging crowds of wild-geese and myriad north-bound ducks depart

(1) SAHARAN SAND-DUNES.

(2) TRANSPORT

(3) A CORRAL, OR PINE-WOOD ENCLOSED BY SAND.

THREE VIEWS IN COTO DOÑANA.

—there pours into Andalucia an inrush of African and sub-tropical bird-forms. The sunlit woodland gleams with brilliant rollers and golden orioles, while bee-eaters, rivalling the rainbow in gorgeous hues, poise and dart in the sunshine, and their harsh "chack, chack," resounds on every side. Woodchats, spotted cuckoos, hoopoes, and russet nightjars appear; lovely wheatears in cream and black adorn the palm-clad plain. With them comes the deluge—no epitomised summary is possible when, within brief limits, the whole feathered population of southern Europe is metamorphosed. The winter half has gone north; its place is filled by the tropical inrush aforesaid. Warblers and waders, larks, finches, and fly-catchers, herons, ibis, ducks, gulls, and terns—all orders and genera pour in promiscuously, defying cursory analysis.

GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO (*Oxylophus glandarius*)

A single class only will here be specifically mentioned, and that because it throws light on climatic conditions. Among these vernal arrivals come certain raptores in countless numbers—all those which are dependent on reptile and insect food. For even in sunny Andalucia the larger reptiles and insects hibernate; hence their persecutors (including various eagles, buzzards, and harriers, with kites and kestrels in thousands) are driven to seek winter-quarters in Africa.

Another phenomenon deserves note. Weeks, nay months, after this great vernal upturn in bird-life has completed its revolution, and when the newcomers have already half finished the duties of incubation, then in May suddenly occurs an utterly belated little migration quite disconnected from all the rest. This is the passage, or rather through-transit, of those far-flying cosmopolites of space that make the whole world their home. They have been wintering in South Africa and Madagascar, in

Australia and New Zealand, and are now returning to their summer breeding-grounds in farthest Siberia, beyond the Yenisei. Thus some morning in early May one sees the marismas filled with godwits and knots, curlew-sandpipers and grey plovers, all in their glorious summer-plumage. But these only tarry here a few days. A short week before they had thronged the shores of the southern hemisphere far beyond the zodiac of Capricorn. A week hence and they are at home in the Arctic.

Andalucia possesses a feathered census that approaches 400 species; but of these hardly a score are permanently resident throughout the year.

"GLOBE-SPANNERS"

Rest twelve hours in Spain on the journey—Australia to Siberia.

Four-footed creatures are less difficult of diagnosis than are birds. By nature less mobile, they are infinitely less numerous specifically. Relatively the Spanish census is long, and includes, locally, quite a number of interesting beasts that are "lumped together" as *Alimañas*—to wit, lynxes, wild-cats, genets, mongoose, foxes, otters, badgers, of which we treat separately. The two chief game-animals of the Coto Doñana are the red deer and the wild-boar. These two we here examine from the sportsman's point of view as much as from that of the naturalist.

The Spanish red deer are specifically identical with those of Scotland and the rest of Europe, and are distributed over the whole southern half of the Iberian Peninsula—say south of a line drawn through Madrid. Their haunts, as a rule, are restricted to the mountain-ranges—especially the Sierra Morena, where they

attain their highest development. That red deer should be found inhabiting lowlands such as the Coto Doñana is wholly exceptional. In Estremadura, it is true, there are wild regions (in Badajoz and Cáceres) where deer are spread far and wide over wooded and scrub-clad plains, all these, however, being subjacent to neighbouring sierras, which refuges are available for retreat in case of need. Nowhere else in Spain, save here in the Coto Doñana only, are red deer restricted exclusively to lowlands.

CONFIDENCE

This South-Spanish race (the southernmost of all if we except the distinct but limited breed that yet maintains a foothold in North Africa, the Barbary stag, which is white-spotted) differs from Scotch types in their longer faces and slim necks unadorned with the hairy "ruff" of harsher climes. Beyond a doubt, when our species-splitting friends arrive in Spain, they will differentiate her red deer (and ibex also) in various species or subspecies, each with a Latin trinomial. Such energies, however, may easily be

superfluous, even where not actually mischievous. For practical purposes there exists but one European species, though it has, even within Spain, its local varieties; while, further afield, geographical and climatic divergencies naturally tend to increase.[1]

We cannot claim for our lowland deer of Doñana a high standard of comparative quality; they are, in fact, the smallest race in Spain, almost puny as compared with her mountain breed —smaller also than the Barbary stag. Clean weights here rarely exceed 200 lbs., while a 30-in. head must be accounted beyond the average. The general type, both of horn and body, is illustrated by various photos and drawings in this book.

ABNORMAL CAST ANTLER
(Picked up in Doñana.)

Deer-shooting in Spain takes place in the winter. The rutting season commences at the end of August, terminating early in October, and stags have recovered condition by the end of November.

The habits of red deer being, here as elsewhere, strictly nocturnal, and the country densely clad with bush, it follows that these animals are seldom seen amove during daylight. Hence deer-stalking, properly so called, is not available, nor is the method much esteemed in Spain. In Scotland one may detect deer, though it be but a tip of an antler, when couched in the tallest heather or fern. Here, where heather grows six or eight feet in height with a bewildering jumble of other shrubbery of like proportions, no such view is possible. Hence "driving" is in Spain the usual method of deer-shooting, whether in mountain or lowland.

There is, nevertheless, one opportunity of stalking which (though not regarded with favour) has yet afforded us delightful mornings, and to which a few lines of description are due. The plan is based upon cutting-out the deer as they return from their

[1] No offence to our scientific friends aforesaid. We recognise their argument and respect its thoroughness, though regarding it as occasionally misdirected. Possibly in their splendid zeal they overlook the danger of reducing scientific classification to a mere monopoly confined to a few score of professors, specialists, and cabinet-naturalists, instead of serving as an aid and general guide (as is surely its true intention) to thousands of less learned students. Over-elaboration is apt to beget chaos.

nocturnal pasturages at daybreak. As the last watch of night wears on towards the dawn, the deer, withdrawing from their feeding-grounds on open strath or marsh, slowly direct a course covertwards, lingering here and there to nibble a tempting genista, or to snatch up a bunch of red bog-grass on their course. We have reached a favourite glade, often used by deer. It is not yet light—rather it might be described as nearly dark—when the splashing of light hoofs through water puts us on the alert. A few moments suffice to gain a bushy point beyond; whence presently six or eight nebulous forms emerge from deceitful gloom. Of course there is not a horn among them, bar a little yearling, for good stags never come thus in troops, and with all due caution, so as to avoid alarming these, we hurry away to try another likely spot. Time is of the essence of this business, for light is now strengthening, and in another half-hour the deer will all have gained their coverts and the chance will be past. Again groups of hinds and small beasties meet our gaze; but some distance beyond are a couple of stags. It is light enough now, by aid of the glass, to count their points—only eight apiece, no use. While yet we watch, a pack of graceful white egrets alight close around the nearer deer—some dart actively between the grazing animals picking flies and insects from their legs and stomachs; two actually perching, cavalier-like, on their withers to search for ticks—magpies, on occasion, we have observed similarly employed. The sun's rim now peers from out the watery wastes in front; nothing worth a bullet has appeared, and our morning's work looks as good as lost when my companion, Pepe, detects two really good stags which, though already within the shelter of fringing pines, yet linger in a lovely glade, tempted for fatal minutes by a clump of flowering rosemary. The wind demands a considerable detour; yet the pair still dally while we gain the deadly range, and a second later the better of the two drops amidst the ensnaring blue blossoms. Pepe's half-soliloquising comment precisely interprets the Spanish estimate

of stalking:—"The first stag I ever saw shot with his head down!" Other countries, other standards; but there is a ring of sterling chivalry in it too. The idea conveyed is that the noble stag should meet his death, only when duly forewarned of danger and bounding in wild career o'er bush and brake.

Without unduly trespassing on our Spanish friends' susceptibilities, we have nevertheless enjoyed such mornings as this. To begin with, that hour of breaking day is ever delicious to spend afield. Therein one observes to best advantage the wild beasts, undisturbed and following their secret, solitary lives—one learns more in that hour than in all the other twenty-three. One seems almost to associate with deer, so near can the troops of hinds and small staggies be approached; and, moreover, there may be afforded the advantage of selecting some splendid head afar, and thus commencing a stalk which, believe me, does not always prove easy. Yonder comes a fox, trotting straight in from his night's hunting in the distant marisma. Let him come on within fifty yards, and then give him a bit of a fright—it is a wild goose he drops as he turns to fly! A single glint of something ruddy catches the eye; this the glass shows to be a sunray playing on the pelt of a prowling lynx, hateful of daylight and hurrying junglewards. Rarely are these nocturnals seen thus, after sun-up, and not for many seconds will the spectacle last; for no animal is more intensely habituated to concealment, or hates so much to move even a few yards in the open.

Following are two or three incidents selected as illustrative of this matutinal work:—

. . . A really fine stag—already against the glory of the eastern light, I have counted thirteen points and there may be more. Half an hour later we have gained a position—not without infinite manœuvres, including a crawl absolutely flat across forty yards of bog and black mire—a position that in five more minutes should secure to us that trophy. The five hinds that, before it was fully light, had been in the Royal company, have already, long ago, passed away in the scrub on our right, and give us now no further concern. Never should hinds be thus lightly regarded! The slowly approaching stag stops to nibble a golden broom. He is already almost within shot—seconds must decide his fate—when a triple bark, petulant and defiant, breaks the silence behind. Those five hinds, sauntering round,

April.

June.

have gone under our wind, and now . . . the landscape is vacant.

"Hinds only bark at a *persona*," remarks Dominguez, as we turn homewards, "never at any other *bicho*." The stag knew that too. But it was a curious way of putting it.

. . . We are too early; it is still pitch-dark; no sign of dawn beyond a slight opalescence low on the eastern horizon. Moreover, an icy wind rustles across the waste, and for dreary minutes we seek shelter, squatting beneath some friendly gorse. Presently a strange sound—a distinct champing, and close by—strikes our ears. "Un javato comiendo" = "a boar feeding," whispers Dominguez, and creeping a few yards towards an open strath, we dimly descry a dusky monster. At the moment his snout is buried deep in the soil, up to the eyes, and the tremendous muscular power exerted in uprooting bulbs of palmetto arrests attention even in the quarter-light. Now he stands quiescent, head up, and the champing is resumed—a rare scene. The distance is a bare fifteen yards, and all the while my companion insists on hissing in my ear, "tiré-lo, tiré-lo" = "shoot, shoot." Presently up goes the boar's muzzle; straight and steadfastly he gazes in our direction, but his glance seemed to pass high over our heads. I don't think he saw us; yet a consciousness of danger had got home—in two bounds he wheeled and disappeared, headlong, amid the bush beyond.

. . . Far and wide the bosky glade is furrowed with sinuous trenches, and infinite turrets stand erect as where children build sand-castles on the beach. Last night a troop of wild-pig have sought here for mole-crickets—small fry, one may think; yet even worms they don't despise, for we have seen masses of these reptiles (some still alive) in the stomach of a newly-shot boar. Follow the spoor onwards, and where it enters a pine-grove, you notice splintered cones and scattered seed. Thus wild-beasts are assisting to fulfil nature's plan, and if you care to advance it another stage, turn some soil over those overlooked pine-nuts, and some day forest-monarchs will result to reward another generation.

Such matutinal forays are, however, but an incident. The main system of dealing with the deer is by driving. For this purpose both the fragrant solitudes of pine and far-stretched wilds of bending cistus are mentally mapped out by the forest-guards

into definite "beats," each of which has its own name; though to a casual visitor (since guns are necessarily placed differently day by day according to the wind) the actual boundaries may appear indefinite enough.

On lowlands such as the Coto Doñana, which is more or less level and open, the use of far-ranging rifles is necessarily restricted by considerations of safety. Obviously no shot, on any pretext whatever, may be fired either into the beat or until the game has passed clear of and well outside the line of guns. In every instance, as a gun is placed, the keeper in charge indicates by lines drawn in the sand or other unmistakable means the limits within which shooting is absolutely prohibited. The result, it follows, not only increases the prospective difficulty of the shot, but gives fuller scope to the instinctive intelligence of the game. For deer, unlike some winged game, do not, when driven, dash precipitately straight for illusory safety, but retire slowly and with extreme circumspection; all old stags, in particular, fully anticipate hidden dangers to lie on their line of flight, and narrowly scrutinise any suspicious feature ahead before taking risks. The gunner will therefore be wise to occupy the few minutes that remain available in so arranging both himself and his post as to be inconspicuous; and also in an accurate survey of his environment with its probable chances, thereby minimising the danger of being taken by surprise. The cunning displayed by an old stag when endeavouring to evade a line of guns at times approaches the marvellous. Thus, on one occasion, the writer was warned of the near approach of game by a single "clink"—a noise which deer sometimes make, probably unintentionally, with the fore-hoof—yet seconds elapsed, and neither sight nor sound were vouchsafed. Then the slightest quiver of a bough beneath caught my eye. A big stag with antlers laid flat aback, and crouching to half his usual height, though going fairly fast, was slipping, silent and invisible, through thick but low brushwood immediately beneath the little hillock whereon I lay. On examining the spot, the spoor showed that he had passed thus through openings barely exceeding two feet in height, though he stood himself forty-six inches at the withers. The feat appeared impossible.[1]

[1] We have known the spoor of a wounded stag pass beneath strong interlacing branches so low that, in following, we have had to wriggle under on hands and knees. The spoor showed there had been no such cervine necessity.

In thick forest or brushwood that limits the view it may be advisable to sit with back towards the beat, relying on ears to indicate the approach or movements of game. While sitting thus, it will occur that you become aware of the arrival of an animal, or of several animals, immediately behind you. The natural inclination to look round is strong; but 'twere folly

SUSPICION

to do so—fatal to success. This is the critical moment, when a few seconds of rigid stillness will be rewarded by a shot in the open. But that stillness must be statuesque, as of a stone god. For piercing eyes are instantly studying each bush and bough, and analysing at close quarters the least symptom of danger ahead.

Should a good stag break fairly near, it is advisable to allow it to pass well away before moving a muscle. For should the game be prematurely alarmed—say by your missing exactly upon the firing-line, or otherwise by its detecting your movement of preparation—that stag will instantly bounce back again into the

beat. Then, assuming that the sportsman is a tyro, or subject to "emotions" or buck-fever, there is danger of his forgetting for one moment his precise permitted line of fire; in which case a perilous shot must result. Once allowed to pass *well outside*, the stag will usually continue on his course.

In this, as in every form of sport, "soft chances" occasionally occur. More often, the rifle will be directed at a galloping stag crashing through bush that conceals him up to the withers; or, it may be, bounding over inequalities of broken ground or brushwood, or among timber, at any distance up to 100 yards, sometimes 150, while, should he have touched a taint in the wind, his pace will be tremendous.

Although to casual view a plain of level contours this country is undulated to an extent that deceives a careless eye—the more accentuated by the monotone of cistus-scrub that appears so uniform. In reality there traverse the plain glens and gently graded hollows the less apt to be noticed, inasmuch as the scrub in moister dell grows higher.

Far through the marish green and still the watercourses sleep.

Inspiring moments are those when—before the beat has commenced—your eye catches on some far-away skyline the broad antlers of a stag. This animal has perhaps been on foot and alert, or maybe has taken the "wind" from the group of beaters wending a way to their points far beyond. For three seconds the antlers remain stationary, then vanish into some intervening glen. A glance around shows your next neighbour still busy completing his shelter—meritorious work if done in time—and you have strong suspicion that the man beyond will just now be lighting a cigarette! Such thoughts flash through one's mind; the dominant question that fills it is: "Where will that great stag reappear?" But few seconds are needed to solve it. Perhaps he dashes, harmless, upon the careless, perhaps upon the slow—lucky for him should either such event befall! On the other hand, those moments of glorious expectancy may resolve in a crash of brushwood hard by, in a clinking of cloven hoofs, and a noble hart with horns aback is bounding past your own ready post. What proportion, we inwardly inquire, of the stags that are killed by craftsmen has already, just before, offered first chance to the careless or the slovenly?

"Inspiring Moments."
(Neither caught napping.)

We may conclude this chapter with an independent impression.

Lying hidden in one of these lonely *puestos*—writes J. C. C.—ever induces in me a powerful and sedative sense of contemplation and reflection, though fully alert all the time. While thus waiting and watching, I can't but marvel, first at nature's wondrous plan of waste—a scheme here without apparent object or promise of fulfilment. Where I lie the prospect comprises nothing but melancholy and unutterably silent solitudes of sand, droughty wastes with but at rare intervals some starveling patch of scant weird shrub destined either to shrivel in summer's sun or shiver in winter's winds. But, lying in that environment, one marvels yet more at the extreme caution displayed by wild animals; one

ALTABACA (*Scrofularia*)
The starveling shrub that grows in sand.

TOMILLO DE ARENA
Another sand-plant (in spring has a lovely pink bloom like sea-thrift).

has exceptional opportunity of admiring the exquisitive gifts bestowed by nature upon her *ferae*. Here is a young stag coming straight along, down-wind, ere yet the beat has begun, and in a desolate spot which to human sense could betray absolutely no feature or taint of danger. Suddenly he becomes rigid, arrested in mid-career—sniffing at a pure untainted air, yet conscious somehow of something wrong somewhere! It is a miraculous gift, though one cannot but feel grateful that we humans are devoid of senses that ever keep nerves in highest tension. Here is a sketch of a non-shootable stag thus suddenly statuetted thirty yards from me snugly hidden well down-wind, and so intensely interested that *something else* (a very old pal) well-nigh escaped notice.

That something was our good friend Reynard—*Zorro* they style him out here—whose proverbial cunning exceeds all other cunnings. He has

come down to my track and there stopped dead, expressing in every detail the very essence of doubly-distilled subtlety and craft. At those footprints he halts, sniffs the wind, curls his brush dubiously—as a cat will do when pleased—but not sure yet of his next move. One second's consideration decides him and it is executed at once—he is off like a gust of wind. But a Paradox ball at easy range in the open broke a

"WHAT'S THIS?"

hind-leg, and it was curious to note his evolutions—he, poor fellow, not realising what had occurred, flung himself round and round in rapid gyrations, the while biting at his own hind-leg. Needless to say not an instant passed ere a second ball terminated his sufferings. To observe the beautiful traits in the habits of wild beasts is to me quite as great a joy as adding them to my score and immensely augments the enjoyment of a big-game drive.

RED DEER HEADS—*COTO DOÑANA.*

This list is neither comprehensive nor consecutive, but merely a record of such good and typical heads as we happened to have within reach.

For Table of Heads of Mountain-Deer see Chapter on Sierra Moréna.

	Length. (Inches.)	Widest.		Circumference.	Points.	Remarks.
		Tips.	Inside.			
W. I. B.	$32\frac{1}{4}$	30	...	...	13	
Do.	$31 + 30\frac{1}{4}$	$32\frac{5}{8}$	...	...	10	No bez.
P. Garvey	31	28	...	$4\frac{5}{8}$	15	
Col. Brymer	$30\frac{1}{2} + 28$	27	23	$4\frac{1}{4}$	10	No bez.
Col. Echagüe	$30\frac{1}{8} + 28\frac{1}{2}$	20	18	$4\frac{1}{2}$	14	4 on each top.
Villa-Marta, Marquis	$29\frac{3}{4} + 29\frac{1}{2}$	$31\frac{1}{4}$	...	$4\frac{1}{2}$	13	4 on each top, but 1 bez wanting.
Segovia, Gonzalo[1]	$29\frac{3}{4} + 29\frac{1}{2}$	$39\frac{1}{2}$	...	$5\frac{1}{4}$	10	No bez.
Arión, Duke of	$29 + 28$	30	...	...	14	
A. C.	$29 + 28\frac{1}{4}$	25	...	5	12	
Do.	$28\frac{1}{2}$	$26\frac{1}{2}$	...	$5\frac{1}{8}$	13	
P. N. Gonzalez	$28\frac{1}{2}$	25	22	5	12	
Arión, Duke of	$28\frac{1}{4}$	23	$21\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{1}{8}$	10	No bez.
F. J. Mitchell	$28 + 27$	$30\frac{1}{2}$	...	...	14	4 on each top.
A. C.	$27 + 26\frac{3}{4}$	24	24	$4\frac{1}{4}$	10	
Do.	$25\frac{1}{2}$	$28\frac{1}{4}$	24	$4\frac{1}{16}$	11	At British Museum.
Williams, Alex.	$25\frac{1}{2}$	$27\frac{3}{4}$	$23\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	12	
B. F. B.	$25\frac{3}{4} + 24$	$27\frac{1}{4}$	$22\frac{3}{4}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	12	
De Bunsen, Sir M.	$25\frac{1}{2} + 25$	27	...	$4\frac{1}{2}$	11	
B. F. B.	$24\frac{1}{2} + 24\frac{1}{2}$	$27\frac{1}{2}$	...	$4\frac{1}{4}$	12	
J. C. C.	23	$29\frac{1}{2}$	$22\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{1}{8}$	12	
B. F. B.	$22\frac{1}{2}$	$21\frac{1}{2}$	19	$4\frac{1}{4}$	12	

[1] Weight, clean, two days killed, 78 kilos = 180 lbs.

Ordinary Royals (by which we mean full-grown stags in their first prime) average 24 or 25 inches in length of horn. Heads of 26 to 28 inches belong to rather older beasts which have continued to improve. Anything beyond the latter measurement is quite exceptional, and is often due, not so much to fair straight length of the main beam as to an abnormal development of one of the top tines—usually directed backwards. There are, however, included in our records two or three examples of long straight heads which fairly exceed the 30-inch length.

CHAPTER V

ANDALUCIA AND ITS BIG GAME

STILL-HUNTING (RED DEER)

THE line of least resistance represents twentieth century ideals—maximum results for the minimum of labour or technical skill. In the field of sport, wherever available, universal "driving" supersedes the arts of earlier venery—the pride of past generations.

In Spain, more leisurely while no less dignified, there survive in sport, as in other matters, practices more consonant with the dash and chivalry popularly ascribed to her national character. Such, for example, is the attack, single-handed, on bear or boar with cold steel—*á arma blanca*, in Castilian phrase. Here we purpose describing the system of "Still-hunting" (*Rastreando*) as practised in Andalucia with a skill that equals the best of the American "Red Indian," and is only surpassed, within our experience, by Somalis and Wandorobo savages in East Africa.

Before day-dawn we are away with our two trackers. Maybe it is a lucky morning, and as the first streaks of light illumine the wastes, they reveal to our gaze a first-rate stag. In that case the venture is vastly simplified. It is merely necessary to allow time for the stag to reach his lie-up, and the spoor can be followed at once. But barring such exceptional fortune, it is necessary to find, or rather to select from amidst infinity of tracks crossing and recrossing hither and thither in bewildering profusion the trail of such a master-beast as clearly is worthy the labour of a long day's pursuit. Twice and again we follow a spoor for 100 yards or more over difficult ground before finally deciding that its owner is not up to our standard of quality, and the interrupted search is resumed. Once found, there is rarely room for mistake with a really big spoor. The breadth of heel, the length and deep-cut prints of the cloven toes attest both weight

and quality. The ground is open, soft, and easy. The big new track, with its spurts of forward-projected sand, are visible yards ahead. We follow almost at a run—how simple it seems! But not for long. Soon comes check No. 1. A dozen other deer have followed on the same line, and the original trail is obliterated. The troop leads on into a region of boundless bush, shoulder-high, where the ground is harder and the trackers spread out to right and left, backing each other with silent signals. Their skill and patience fascinate; but it is to me, in the centre, that after a long hour's scrutiny, falls the satisfaction of rediscovering that big track where it diverges alone on the left. Half a mile beyond, our erratic friend has passed through water. For a space a broken reed here or displaced lilies there help us forward; then the deepening water, all open, bears no trace. The opposite shore, moreover, is fringed by a 200-yard belt of bulrush and ten-foot canes, and beyond all that lies heavy jungle.

You give it up? Admittedly these are no lines of least resistance, but we will cut the unpopular part as short as may be and merely add that it was high noon ere, after three hours' work —puzzling out problems and paradoxes, now following a false clue, anon recovering the true one—that at last the big spoor on dry land once more rejoiced our sight. More than that, it now bears evidence — to eyes that can read — that our stag is approaching his selected stronghold. He goes slowly. Here he has stopped to survey his rear—there he has lingered to nibble a genista, and the spoor zigzags to and fro. Now it turns at sharp angle, following a cheek-wind, and a suggestive grove of cork-oaks embedded in heavy bush lies ahead. One hunter opines the stag lies up here: the other doubts. No half-measures suffice. We turn down-wind, detouring to reach the main outlet (*salida*) to leeward; here I remain hidden, while my companions, separating on right and left, proceed to encircle the *mancha*. Two hinds break hard by, and presently Juan returns with word that the stag has passed through the covert—better still, that a second big beast has joined the first, and that the double spoor, moving dead-slow and three-quarters up wind, proceeds due north. Another mile and then right ahead lies heavy covert, but long and straggling, and the halting trail indicates this as a certain find.

The strategic position is simple, but tactics, for a single gun,

leave endless scope for decision. Our first rule in all such cases is to get *close in*, risk what it may. Hence, while my companions separated, as before, to encircle the covert from right and left, the writer crept forward yard by yard till a fairly broad and convenient open suggested the final stand.

Not ten minutes had elapsed, nor had a sound reached my ears, when as by magic the figure of a majestic stag filled a glade on the left—what a picture, as with head erect he daintily picked his unconscious way! Clearly he suspected nothing *here*; but, having got sense, sight, or scent of Juan far beyond, was astutely moving away, with intelligent anticipation, to safer retreat. The shot was of the simplest, and merely black antlers crowned with triple ivory tips marked the fatal point among deep green rushes.

Now when two big stags fraternise, as they frequently do, it usually happens that, when pressed, both animals will finally seek the same exit, even though a shot has already been fired there. I had accordingly instructed the keepers that in the event of my firing, each should discharge his gun in the air, at the same time loosing one dog. The expected shots now rang out, presently followed by a crashing in the brushwood. This proved to be caused by a handful of hinds with, alas! the loose dog baying at their heels. The adverse odds had fallen to zero, till Juan, divining what had occurred, fired again and slipt the other dog. Anxious minutes slowly passed while my two biped sleuth-hounds on the other side gradually, yard by yard, made good their advance; for the wit and wiles, the practised cunning of an old stag when thus cornered, need every scrap of our human skill to out-general, and nothing to spare at that. But that skill was not at fault to-day, and in the thick of the *mancha*, Manuel presently "jumped" the recusant hart from almost beneath his feet, and his view-halloa reached expectant ears.

Then, within a few yards of the spot where No. 1 had silently appeared, out bounced No. 2, but in widely different style. In huge bounds, with head and neck horizontal and antlers laid flat aback, he covered the open like a racer. The first shot got in too far back, but the second went right, and the two friends lay not divided in death. Both were *coronados* (triple-crowned), indeed the second carried

four-on-top in double pairs as sketched—a not uncommon formation—but being very old, lacked bez tines.

Very nearly five hours had elapsed since we had first struck the spoor, five hours of concentrated attention, crowned by the final assertion of human "dominion." And during these moments of permissible expansion, there was impressed on our minds the fact that such success involves mastery of a difficult craft.

"TAKING THE WIND"

(A stag, on recognising human scent, will give a bound as though a knife had been plunged into his heart.)

Illustrative of how astutely a cornered stag will exploit every device and avenue of escape, an excellent instance is given in *Wild Spain*, p. 434.

Skilled deer-driving is a different undertaking from the *force majeure* by which pheasants and such-like game may be pushed over a line of guns. For deer do not act on timid impulse, but on practical instinct. Scent is their first safeguard when danger

threatens and their natural flight is up-wind. But as it is obviously impossible to place guns to windward, the operation resolves itself into moving the game—dead against its instinct and set inclination — down-wind, or at least on a "half-wind." The latter is easier as an operation, but less effective in result: since the guns must be posted in echelon—otherwise each "gives the wind" to his next neighbour below. Consequently the firing-zone of each is greatly circumscribed.

In practice, therefore, the game has to be moved or cajoled—it can hardly be said to be "driven"—into going, at least so far, down-wind by skilled handling of the driving line and by intelligent co-operation on the part of each individual driver. In the great mountain-drives of the sierras (elsewhere described) packs of hounds, being carefully trained, perform infinite service. Always under control of their huntsman, they systematically search out thickets impenetrable to man and push all game forward. In the Coto Doñana, our scratch-pack of *podencos* and mongrels of every degree, run riot unchecked at hind, hare, or rabbit, giving tongue in all directions at once, and probably do as much harm as good.

Our mounted keepers, however, expert in divining afar the yet unformed designs of the game ahead, are quick to counter each move by a feint or demonstration behind; and when desirable, to forestall attempted escape by resolute riding. The Spanish are a nation of horsemen, and a fine sight it is to see these wild guardas galloping helter-skelter through scrub that reaches the saddle—especially the way they ride down a wounded stag or boar with the *garrocha*—a long wooden lance.

Despite it all, however, many stags break back. Riding with the beaters it is instructive to watch the manœuvres of an old stag as, sinking from sight, he couches among quite low scrub on some hillock, or stands statuesque with horns aback hiding behind a clump of tall tree-heaths—alert all the while, stealthily to shift his position as yapping *podencos* on one side or the other may suggest—and watching each opportunity to evade the encompassing danger. Now a stretch of denser jungle obstructs the advancing line. The beaters are forced apart to pass it, and a gap or two yawns in the attack. Instantly that introspective wild beast realises his advantage—he springs to sight, ignores Spanish expletives that scorch the scrub, and in giant bounds

breaks back in the very face of encircling foes. Within thirty seconds he has regained security amid leagues of untrodden wilds.

Some years ago we tried the plan of placing one (or two) guns with the driving-line; but the experiment proved impracticable. Obviously only the coolest and most reliable men could be trusted in an essay which otherwise involved danger. Unfortunately—and it is but human nature—every one considers himself equally cool and reliable. Hence the breakdown and abandonment of the practice. For the long line of beaters, struggling at different points through obstacles of varying difficulty, necessarily loses precise formation; it becomes more or less broken and scattered. Here and there a man may get "stuck" and left a hundred yards behind the general advance. The risk in "firing back" is obvious. The writer remembers being one of two guns with the beaters, when a pair of stags, jumping up close ahead, bolted straight back, passing almost within arm's length. As the second carried a fairly good head, I dismounted and shot it, but was then horrified to discover that my companion-gun had (contrary to all rules) gone back in that very direction to shoot a *woodcock!*

Driving Big Game

On "driving" as such we do not propose to enlarge. The system is simple though the practice is subject to variation. On the gently undulated levels of Doñana, for example, the latter (as already indicated) is widely differentiated from the systems practised in mountainous countries—whether in Scotland or the Spanish sierras—where shots can safely be accepted at incoming or at passing game. Guns are there protected from danger by intervening ridges, crags, and piled-up rocks that flank each "pass." Here the game must be left to pass well through and outside the line of guns before a shot is permissible.

Our "drives," whether in forest or scrub, seldom exceed a couple of miles in extent; but in wild regions where isolated patches of covert are scattered, inset amid wastes of sand, the area may be extended to half a day's ride. These long scrambling drives gain enhanced interest to a naturalist in precisely inverse ratio with their probability of success.

In a big-game drive the first animals to come forward are,

as a rule, foxes and lynxes—creatures which move on impulse, and instantly quit a zone where danger threatens. Both, however, will certainly pass unseen should there be any scrub to conceal their retreat. The lynx especially is adept at utilising cover, however slight. Should open patches or sandy glades occur among the bush, foxes will be viewed bundling along, to all appearance quite carelessly. Here in Spain foxes are merely "vermin"; but it is a mistake to shoot them, owing to the risk of thereby turning back better game. Neither lynx nor fox, by the way, are accounted *caza mayor* unless killed with a bullet.

SYLVIA MELANOCEPHALA
(Sardinian warbler; conspicuous by its strong colour-contrasts.)

As elsewhere mentioned, there is always a considerable possibility at the earlier period of a "drive" (and even *before* the operation has actually commenced) of some old and highly experienced stag attempting to slip through the line in the calculated hope (which is often well founded) that he will thereby take most of the guns by surprise and so escape unshot at. Never be unready.

Although in "driving," that element of ceaseless personal effort, observation and self-reliance that characterise stalking, still-hunting, or spooring, is necessarily reduced, yet it is by no means eliminated. Nor are there lacking compensating charms in those hours of silent expectancy spent in the solitude of jungle or amid the aromatic fragrance of pine-forest. Every

sense is held in tension to mark and measure each sign or sound; 'tis but the fall of a pine-cone that has caught your ear, but it might easily have been a single footfall of game. The wild-life of the wilderness pursues its daily course around unconscious of a concealed intruder in its midst. Overhead, busy hawfinches wrestle with ripening cones, swinging in gymnastic attitude. These are silent. You have first become aware of their presence by a shower of scales gently fluttering down upon the shrubbery of genista and rosemary alongside, amidst the depths of which lovely French-grey warblers with jet-black skull-caps (*Sylvia melanocephala*) pursue insect-prey with furious energy—dashing into the tangle of stems reckless of damage to tender plumes. There are other bush-skulkers infinitely more reclusive than these—some indeed whose mere existence one could never hope to verify (in winter) save by patience and these hours of silent watching. Such are the Fantail, Cetti's, and Dartford warblers, while among sedge and cane-brake alert reed-climbers beguile and delight these spells of waiting. Soldier-ants and horned beetles with laborious gait, but obvious fixity of purpose, pursue their even way, surmounting all obstruction—such as boot or cartridge-bag. Earth and air alike are instinct with humble life.

REED-CLIMBERS

To a northerner it is hard to believe that this is mid-winter, when almost every tree remains leaf-clad, the brushwood green and flower-spangled. Arbutus, rosemary, and tree-heath are already in bloom, while bees buzz in shoulder-high heather and suck honey from its tricoloured blossoms — purple, pink, and

violet. Strange diptera and winged creatures of many sorts and sizes, from gnat and midge to savage dragon-flies, rustle and drone in one's ear or poise on iridescent wing in the sunlight, and the hateful hiss of the mosquito mingles with the insect-melody. Over each open flower of rock-rose or cistus hovers the humming-bird hawk-moth with, more rarely, one of the larger sphinxes (*S. convolvuli*), each with long proboscis inserted deep in tender calyx. Not even the butterflies are entirely absent. We have noticed gorgeous species at Christmas time, including clouded yellows, painted lady and red admiral, southern wood-argus, Bath white, *Lycaena telicanus*, *Thais polyxena*, *Megaera*, and many more. On the warm sand at midday bask pretty green and spotted lizards,[1] apparently asleep, but alert to dart off on slightest alarm, disappearing like a thought in some crevice of the cistus stems.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE (*Lanius meridionalis*)

Hard by a winter-wandering hoopoe struts in an open glade, prodding the earth with curved bill and crest laid back like a "claw-hammer"; from a tall cistus-spray the southern grey shrike mumbles his harsh soliloquy, and chattering magpies everywhere surmount the evergreen bush. Where the warm sunshine induces untimely ripening of the tamarisk, some brightly coloured birds flicker around pecking at the buds. They appear to be chaffinches, but a glance through the glass identifies them as bramblings—arctic migrants that we have shot here in midwinter with full black heads—in "breeding-plumage" as some call it, though it is merely the result of the wearing-away of the original grey fringe to each feather, thus exposing the glossy violet-black bases.

Birds, as a broad rule, possess no "breeding-plumage." They only renew their dress once a year, in the autumn, and breed the

[1] There are sand-lizards identical in colour with the sand itself—pale yellow or drab, adorned with wavy black lines closely resembling the wind-waves on the sand.

following spring in the worn and ragged plumes. It's not poetic, but the fact.[1] This is not the place to enumerate all the characteristic forms of bird-life, and only one other shall be mentioned, chiefly because the incident occurred the day we drafted this chapter. One hears behind the rustle of strong wings, and there passes overhead in dipping, undulated flight a green woodpecker of the Spanish species, *Gecinus sharpei*. With a regular thud

SPANISH GREEN WOODPECKER (*Gecinus sharpei*)
(1) Alighting. (2) Calling.

he alights on the rough bark of a cork-oak in front, clings in rigid aplomb while surveying the spot for any sign of danger, then projects upwards a snake-like neck and with vertical beak gives forth a series of maniacal shrieks that resound through the silences.[2] By all means watch and study every phase of wild-

[1] There are, of course, exceptions, such as golden plovers, ruffs, dunlin, godwits, knots, that do assume a vernal dress.

[2] This, the southernmost form of the green woodpecker, has much the most ringing voice. The closely allied northern form, *G. canus*, that one hears constantly in Norway, utters but a sharp monosyllabic note. A second curious fact may here be mentioned: that the great grey shrike, just named, *Lanius meridionalis*, is resident in Spain throughout the year, while the closely allied and almost identical *L. excubitor* breeds exclusively in the far north

life around you—the habit will leave green memories when the keener zest for bigger game shall have dimmed—but never be caught napping, or let a silent stag pass by while your whole attention is concentrated on a tarantula!

A TARANTULA

By way of illustrating the practice of "driving," we annex three or four typical instances:

Las Angosturas, *February* 5, 1907.—The writer's post was in a green glade surrounded by pine-forest. A heavy rush behind was succeeded (as anticipated) by the appearance of a big troop of hinds followed by two small staggies. A considerable distance behind these came a single good stag, and already the sights had covered his shoulder, when from the corner of an eye a second, with far finer head, flashed into the picture, going hard, and I decided to change beasts. It was, however, too late. Half automatically, while eyes wandered, fingers had closed on trigger. At the shot the better stag bounded off with great uneven strides through the timber, offering but an uncertain mark. Both animals, however, were recovered. The first, an eleven-pointer, lay dead at the exact spot; the second was brought to bay within 300 yards, a fine royal.

Los Novarros, *January* 9, 1903.—My post was among a grove of pine-saplings in a lovely open plain surrounded by forest. Two good stags trotted past, full broadside, at 80 yards. The first dropped in a heap, as though pole-axed, the second receiving a ball that clearly indicated a kill. While reloading, noticed with surprise that No. 1 had regained his legs and was off at speed. A third bullet struck behind; but it was not till two hours later, after blood-spooring for half a league, that we recovered our game. The first shot had struck a horn (at junction of trez tine) cutting it clean in two. This had momentarily stunned the animal, but the effect had passed off within

(chiefly within the Arctic) and only descends to England in winter. Besides the harsh note mentioned above, the southern shrike, in spring, utters a piping whistle not unlike a golden plover.

ten seconds. Both were ten-pointers, with strong black horns, ivory-tipped. During that afternoon I got a big boar at Mac-Corra; and B., who had set out at 4 A.M., twenty-three geese at the Cardo-Inchal.

Far North, *January* 31, 1907.—First beat by the "Eagles' Nest" (in the biggest cork-oak we ever saw, the imperial bird soaring off as we rode up). Brushwood everywhere tall and dense, giving no view. On placing me the keeper remarked, "By this little glade (*canuto*) deer *must* break, but amidst such jungle will need *un tiro de merito*!" Four stags broke, two were missed, but one secured—seven points on one horn, the other broken. So dense is the bush here that a lynx ran almost over the writer's post, yet had vanished from sight ere gun could be brought to shoulder. In the next beat, La Querencia del Macho (again all dense bush), B. shot two really grand companion stags, but again one of these had a broken horn. This animal while at bay so injured the spine of one of our dogs that it had to be killed two days later.[1] A third beat added one more big stag, and the day's result—four stags with only two "heads"—is so curious that we give the detail:—

	Length.	Breadth.	Points.
W. E. B.[2] . .	23½″	(One horn)	7 × 2
W. J. B. (No. 1) .	28″	Do.	6 × 2
W. J. B. (No. 2) .	25″ × 25″	25″	7 × 6 = 13
A. C. . . .	26″ × 24″	20½″	6 × 5 = 11

Amidst forest or in dense jungle (such as last described) where no distant view is possible, it is usually advisable to watch outwards—that is, with back towards the beat, relying on *ears*

[1] This is only the second instance in thirty or forty years of a wounded or "bayed" stag killing a dog. In the Culata del Faro, we remember, many years ago, a stag shot through the lungs, and which was brought to bay close behind the writer's post, tossing a *podenco* clean over its head, and so injuring it that the dog had to be destroyed at once.

[2] The initials are those of our late friend Colonel Brymer of Ilsington, Dorset, formerly M.P. for that county, and who was a frequent visitor to Spain, where, alas! his death occurred while we write this chapter (May 1909). A unique exploit of the Colonel's during his last shooting-trip may fitly be recorded. On February 5, 1909, at the Culata del Faginado, four big stags broke in a clump past his post on a pine-crowned ridge in the forest. Two he dropped right and left; then reloading one barrel, killed a third ere the survivors had vanished from sight. These three stags carried thirty-four points, the best head taping 30½ inches by 27 inches in width, and 4¼ inches basal circumference.

to give notice of the movements of game within. But in (more or less) open country where a view, oneself unseen, can be obtained afar, the situation is modified. The following is an example :—

Corral Quemado, *February* 1, 1909.—The authors occupied the two outmost posts on a high sand-ridge which commanded an introspect far away into the heart of the covert. Already before the distant signal had announced that the converging lines of beaters had joined, suddenly an apparition showed up. Some 300 yards away a low pine-clad ridge traversed the forest horizon, and in that moment the shadows beneath became, as by magic, illumined by an inspiring spectacle—the tracery of great spreading antlers surmounting the sunlit grey face and neck of a glorious stag. For twenty seconds the apparition (and we) remained statuesque as cast in bronze. Then, with the suddenness and silence of a shifting shadow, the deep shade was vacant once more. The stag had retired. It boots not to recall those agonies of self-reproach that gnawed one's very being. Suffice it, they were undeserved; for five or six minutes later that stag re-appeared, leisurely cantering forward. Clearly no specific sign or suspicion of danger ahead had struck his mind or dictated that retirement. But his course was now, by mere chance and uncalculated cunning, 300 yards outside the sphere of your humble servants, the authors. That stag was now about to offer a chance to gun No. 3, instead of, as originally, to Nos. 1 and 2. Eagerly we both watched his course, now halting on some ridge to reconnoitre, gaze shifting, and ears deflecting hither and thither, anon making good another stage towards the goal of escape. A long shallow *canuto* (hollow) concealed his bulk from view, but we now saw by the bunchy "show" on top that this was a prize of no mean merit. Then came the climax. Rising the slope which ended the *canuto*, in an instant the stag stopped, petrified. Straight on in front of him, not 100 yards ahead, lay No. 3 gun, and the fatal fact had been discovered. It may have been an untimely movement, perhaps a glint of sunray on exposed gun-barrel, or merely the outline of a cap three inches too high—anyway the ambush had been detected, and now the stag swung at right angles and sought in giant bounds to pass behind No. 2. It was a long

shot, very fast, and intercepted by intervening trees and bush —the second barrel directed merely at a vanishing stern. Yet such was our confidence in the aim—in both aims—that not even the subsequent sight of our antlered friend jauntily cantering away down the long stretch of Los Tendidos impaired by one iota its self-assurance. For a mile and more we followed that bloodless spoor, far beyond the point whereat the keeper's solemn

verdict had been pronounced, "No lleva náda—that stag goes scot-free." As usual, that verdict was correct.

An incident worth note had occurred meanwhile. On the extreme left of our line, a mile away, two stags out of four that broke across the sand-wastes had been killed; and these, while we yet remained on the scene (though a trifle delayed by fruitless spooring) had already been attacked and torn open by a descending swarm of vultures. That, in Africa, is a daily experience, but never, before or since, have we witnessed such unseemly voracity in Europe.

Majada Real.—This is the one lowland covert where shots are permissible at incoming game. Being flanked on the west by gigantic sand-dunes, the guns (under certain conditions) may be lined out a couple of miles away, along the outskirts of the next nearest covert—the idea being to take the stags as they canter across the intervening dunes. The conditions referred to are (1) a straight east wind, and (2) reliable guns. Obviously the element of *danger* under this plan is vastly increased, and as the keepers are responsible for any accident, they are reluctant to execute the drive thus save only when their confidence in the guns is complete.[1] A careless man on a grouse-drive is dangerous enough; but here, with rifle-bullets, a reckless shot may spell death. The "in-drive," nevertheless, is both curious and interesting. A spectacle one does not forget is afforded when the far-away skyline of dazzling sand is suddenly surmounted by spreading antlers, and some great hart, perhaps a dozen of them, come trotting all unconscious directly towards the eager eyes watching and waiting. The effect of a shot under these conditions is frequently to turn the game off at right angles. The deer then hold a course parallel with the covert-side, thus running the gauntlet of several guns, and the question of "first blood" may become a moot point—easily determined, however, by reference to the spoor. Boar naturally are averse to take such open ground; but when severely pressed, we have on occasion seen them scurrying across these Saharan sands, a singular sight under the midday sun.

To introspective minds two points may have showed up in these rough outline illustrations. First, that the best stags are ever the earliest amove when danger threatens. These not seldom escape ere a slovenly gunner is aware that the beat has begun. The moral is clear. Secondly, as these bigger and older beasts exhibit fraternal tendencies, it follows that a first chance (whether availed or bungled) need not necessarily be the last.

Besides deer, it is quite usual that wild-boar, as well as lynxes and other minor animals, come forward on these "drives." The divergent nature of pig, however, renders a

[1] Not a single accident, great or small, has occurred during the authors' long tenure of the Coto Doñana.

more specialised system advisable when wild-boar only are the objective. For whereas the aboriginal stag seeking a "lie-up" wherein to pass the daylight hours was satisfied by any sequestered spot that afforded shelter and shade from the sun, that was never the case with the jungle-loving boar. To the stag strong jungle and heavy brushwood were ever abhorrent, handicapping his light build and branching antlers. Clumps of tall reed-grass or three-foot rushes, a patch of cistus or rosemary, amply fulfilled his diurnal ideals and requirements. Nowadays, it is true, the expanded sense of danger, the increasing pressure of modern life—even cervine life—force him to select strongholds which offer greater security though less convenience. The wild-boar, on the reverse, with lower carriage and pachydermatous hide, instinctively seeks the very heaviest jungle within his radius—the more densely briar-matted and impenetrable the better he loves it.

Many such holts—some of them may be but a few yards in extent—are necessarily passed untried both by dogs and men when engaged in "driving" extended areas, sometimes miles of consecutive forest and covert. The somnolent boar hears the passing tumult, lifts a grisly head, grunts an angry soliloquy, and goes to sleep again, secure. Another day you have returned expressly to pay specific attention to him. In brief space he has diagnosed the difference in attack. Instantly that boar is alert, ready to repel or scatter the enemy, come who may, on two legs or four.

HOOPOES
On the lawn at Jerez, March 19, 1910.

CHAPTER VI

ANDALUCIA AND ITS BIG GAME (*Continued*)

WILD-BOAR

From one's earliest days the wild-boar has been invested with a sort of halo of romance, identified in youthful mind with grim courage and brute strength. Perhaps his grisly front, the vicious bloodshot eyes, savage snorts, and generally malignant demeanour, lend substance to such idea. But even among adults there exists in the popular mind a strange mixture of misconception as between big game and dangerous game—to hundreds the terms are synonymous. Thus a lady, inspecting our trophies, exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. ——, aren't these beasts very treacherous?" which almost provoked the reply, "You see, we are even more treacherous!"

In sober truth, nevertheless, a big old boar when held up at bay, or charging in headlong rushes upon the dogs, his wicked eyes flashing fire, and foam flying from his jaws as tushes clash and champ, presents as pretty a picture of brute-fury and pluck as even a world-hunter may wish to enjoy.

Yet among hundreds of boars that we have killed or seen killed (though dogs are caught continually, and occasionally a horse), there has never occurred a serious accident to the hunter, and only a few narrow escapes.

As an example of the latter: the keeper, while "placing" the writer among bush-clad dunes outside the Mancha of Majada Real, mentioned that a very big boar often frequented some heavy rush-beds on my front. "Should the dogs give tongue to pig at that point, your Excellency will at once run in to the function." Such were his instructions.

At the point indicated the dogs bayed unmistakably, and seizing a light single carbine, ·303 (as there was a stretch of heavy

sand to cover) I ran in. Arriving at the covert and already close up to the music, suddenly the "bay" broke, and I felt the bitter annoyance of being twenty seconds too slow. I had entered by a narrow game-path, and was still hurrying up this when I met the flying boar face to face. By chance he had selected the same track for his retreat! As we both were moving, and certainly not six yards apart, there was barely

ROOM FOR TWO

time to pull off the carbine in the boar's face and throw myself back against the wall of matted jungle on my left. Next moment the grizzly head and curving ivories flashed past within six inches of my nose! The spring he had given carried the boar a yard past me, and there he stopped, stern-on, champing and grunting, both tushes visible—I could see them in horrid projection, on either side of the snout! I had brought the empty carbine to the "carry," so as to use it bayonet-wise, to ward the brute off my legs; but he remained stolidly where

he had stopped, and, as may be imagined, I stood stolid too. As it proved, the bullet, entering top of shoulder, had traversed the vitals—hence the cessation of hostilities. A few moments later the arrival of the dogs terminated an untoward interval.

On another occasion at the Veta de las Conchas, amidst the lovely *pinales*, just as the beat was concluded, there dashed from a small thicket a troop of a dozen pig, making direct for the solitary pine behind which the writer held guard. Passing full broadside, at thirty yards the biggest dropped dead on the sand, and, just as the troop disappeared in a donga, a second, it seemed, was knocked over. On the beaters approaching I walked across to see, and there, in the hollow, lay the second pig apparently dead enough. Having picked up my field-glasses, cartridge-pouch, etc., I stood close by awaiting the keeper's arrival. Three or four dogs, however, following on the spoor, arrived first; and on their worrying the deceased, it at once sprang to its feet, gazed for one instant, and charged direct. Never have I seen an animal cover twenty yards more quickly! Dropping the handful of *chismes* aforesaid, I pulled off an unaimed cartridge in my assailant's face and a lucky bullet struck rather below the eyes. This is not a dead shot, but the shock at that short distance proved sufficient.

An amusing incident, not dissimilar, occurred at Salavar. A youthful sportsman was approaching a boar which had fallen and lay apparently dead, when it, too, suddenly sprang up and charged. Our friend turned and fled; but, tripping over a fallen branch, fell headlong amidst the green rushes. There, face-downwards, he lay, preferring, as he explained later, "to receive his wound behind rather than have his face messed about by a boar!" Luckily the animal, on losing sight of its flying foe, pulled up and stood, grunting surprise and disapproval.

A similar experience befell King Alfonso XIII. in this Mancha of Salavar, December 29, 1909. We need not tell English readers that His Majesty proved equal to this, as to every occasion, and dropped his adversary at arm's length.

When one reads (as we do) descriptions of big-game hunting, a recurring expression gives pause—that of "charging." A recent discussion in a sporting paper turned on the question of "the best weapon for a charging boar." Now such a thing as a "charging boar" has never, in a long experience, occurred

to the authors—that is, a boar charging deliberately, and of its own initiative, upon human beings; and we do not believe in the possibility of such an event. Of course should a boar (or any other savage animal) be disabled, or in a corner, that is a different matter—then a wild-boar will fight, and right gallantly too.

The nearest approach to a "charge" (though it wasn't one really) occurred at the Rincon de los Carrizos. Towards the end of the beat the dogs ran a pig, and, seeing it was a big one, the writer followed, and after a spin of 300 yards overtook the boar at bay in a deep water-hole. The place was all overhung with heavy foliage and thick pines above, giving very poor light. Though the boar's snout pointed straight towards me about ten yards away, I imagined (wrongly) that his body stood at an angle—about one-third broadside: hence the bullet (aimed past the ear), splashed harmlessly in the water, and next moment the pig was coming straight as a die, apparently meaning mischief. When within five yards, however, he jinked sharply to right, passing full broadside, when I killed him *á-boca-jarro*, as the phrase runs, "at the mouth of the spout."

That idea of "charging at large" is so splendidly romantic, and fits in so appropriately with preconceived ideas, that we almost regret to disturb its semi-fossilised acceptance. But, in mere fact, neither boars nor any other wild beasts "charge" at sight—always and only excepting elephant and rhinoceros, either of which *may* (or may not) do so, though previously unprovoked. It would, at least, be unwise entirely to ignore the contingency of either of these two so acting.

There exist, nevertheless, old and evil-tempered boars that

are quite formidable adversaries. We have many such in our Coto Doñana—boars that, having once overmastered our hounds, practically defy us. Each of these old solitary tuskers occupies some densely briared stronghold—it may be but an isolated patch of jungle, scarce half an acre in extent, or alternatively, a little sequence of similar thickets, each connected by intervals of lighter bush. Such spots abound by the hundred, but once the lair of our bristled friend is found, then there is work cut out for man, horse, and hound. For long-drawn-out minutes the silence of the wilderness re-echoes with doubly concentrated fury frantic hound-music mingled with lower accompaniment of sullen, savage snorts and grunts and the champing of tusks; then a sharp crunch of breaking boughs . . . and the death-yell of a *podenco* tells that *that* blow has got home. But the seat of war remains unchanged—the same rush and the same fatal result are repeated. Presently some venturous hound may discover an entry from behind. The enemy's flank is turned, and with a crash that seems to shake the very earth, our boar retreats to a second stronghold only twenty yards away. All this is occurring within arm's length; one hears, can almost feel, the stress of mortal combat, but one sees nothing inside the mural foliage, nor knows what moment the enemy may sally forth. Such moments may even excite what are termed in Spanish phrase "emotions."

In his second "Plevna" our boar is secure, and he knows it. With rear and flanks protected by a *revêtement* of gnarled roots and a labyrinth of stems, he fears nothing behind, while the furiously baying hounds on his front he now utterly despises. Blank shots fired in the air alarm him not, nor will Pepe Espinal —in a service of danger—succeed in dislodging him with a *garrocha*, after a perilous climb along the briar-matted roof. That boar is victor—master of a stricken field.

One human resource remains, to go in *á arma blanca*—with the cold steel. There are dashing spirits who will do this—in Spain we have seen such. But to crawl thus, prostrate, into the dark and gloomy tunnels that form a wild-boar's fortress, intercepted and obstructed on every side, there to attack in single combat a savage beast, still unhurt and in the flush of victory, pachydermatous, and whose fighting weight far exceeds your own—well, *that* we place in the category of pure recklessness.

Courage is a quality that all admire, though one may wonder if it is not sometimes over-esteemed, when we find it possessed in common, not only by very many wild-beasts, but even by savage races of human kind—races which we regard as "lower," yet not inferior in that cherished quality of "pluck."

Before you crawl in there, stop to think of the annoyance the act may cause not merely to our hunt, but possibly to a wife, otherwise to sisters, friends, or hospital nurses, even, it may be, to an undertaker—though he will not object.

Once victorious over canine foes, it will be a remote chance indeed that that boar, unless caught by mishap in some carelessly chosen lair, will ever again show up as a mark for the fore-sight of a rifle.

After one such rout, we remember finding our friend the Reverend Father, who had sallied forth with us for a mild morning's shooting, perched high up among the branches of a thorny *sabina* (a kind of juniper), whence we rescued him, cut and bleeding, and badly "shaken in nerve!"

We add the following typical instances of boar-shooting:

Salavar, *February* 1, 1900.—A lovely winter's morn, warm sun and dead calm. The distant cries of the beaters (nigh three miles away) had just reached my ears, when a nearer sound riveted attention—the soft patter of hoofs upon sand. Then from the forest-slope behind appeared a pig—big and grey—trotting through deep rushes some forty yards away. Already the fore-sight was "touching on" its neck, when a lucky suspicion of striped piglings following their mother arrested the ball. Next came along a gentle hind with all her infinite grace of contour and carriage. At twenty-five yards she faced full round, and for long seconds we stared eye to eye. Curious it is that absolute quiescence will puzzle the wildest of the wild! Hardly had she vanished 'midst forest shades, than once again that muffled patter—this time an unmistakable tusker. But, oh! what an abominable shot I made—too low, too far back—and onwards he pursued his course. By our forest laws it was my *deber* (bounden duty) to follow the stricken game. All that noontide, all the afternoon—through bush and brake, by dell and dusky defile—patiently, persistently, did Juanillo Espinal and I follow every twist and turn of that unending spoor. There was blood to help us at first, none thereafter. Through the thickets of

Sabinal, then back on the left by Mañ-Corra, forward through the Carrizal, thence crossing the Corral Grande, and away into the great *pinales* beyond—away to the Rincon de los Carrizos, three solid leagues and a bit to spare! That was the price of a bungled shot.

Here at last we have tracked him to his lair. Within that sullen fortress of the Rincon lies our wounded boar. How to get him out is a different problem. Though wounded, he is in no way disabled, and is ready, aye "spoiling," to put up a savage fight for his life. Having precisely located him in a dense tangle of lentisk and briar, our single dog, Careto, a tall, shaggy *podenco*, not unlike a deerhound, but on smaller scale, is let go. Up a gloomy game-path he vanishes, and in a moment fierce music startles the silent woods. The boar refused to move. But one resource remained. We must go in to help Careto, crawling up a briar-laced tunnel. It was horribly dark at first, and I began to think of . . . when, fortunately, the light improved, and a few yards farther in a savage scene was enacting in quite a considerable open. Beneath its brambled roof we could stand half upright. In its farthest corner stood our boar at bay, a picture of sullen ferocity. Upon Juanillo's appearance the scene changed as by magic—there was a rush and resounding crash. Precisely what happened during the three succeeding seconds deponent could not see, it being so gloomy, and Juanillo on my front. Ere a cartridge could be shoved into the breech the great boar was held up, Careto hanging on to his right ear, and Juanillo, springing over the dog, had seized the grisly beast by both hind-legs—at the hocks—and stepping backward, with one mighty heave flung the boar sidelong on the earth. Next moment I had driven the knife through his heart.

Though the method described is regularly employed by Spanish hunters to seize and capture a wounded or "bayed" boar—and we have seen it executed dozens of times—yet seldom in such a spot as this, cramped in space, handicapped by bad light and intercepting boughs and briars. It was a dramatic scene, and a bold act that bespoke cool head and brawny biceps.

The head of this boar hangs on our walls to commemorate an event we are not likely to forget.

We remember following a wounded lynx into a similar spot—a deep hollowed jungle. A pandemonium of savage snarling

and spitting, barks and yowls greeted our ears as we crawled in, while on reaching the cavern the green eyes of the lynx flashed like electric lights from a dark recess. Though one hind-leg had been broken and the other damaged by a rifle-ball, yet she held easy mastery over five or six dogs. Sitting bolt upright, she kept the lot at bay with sweeping half-arm blows. Not a dog dared close, and the brave feline had to be finished with the lance.

Mancha del Milagro, *February* 4, 1908.—The covert, we knew by spoor, held a first-rate boar, and his most probable *salida* (break-out) was at the foot of a perpendicular sand-wall, within fifty yards of which the writer held guard. Within brief minutes the music of the pack corroborated what had been foretold by spoor. Twice the boar with crashing course encircled the *mancha* within, passing close inside my post. Each moment I watched for his appearance at the expected point on the right. Then, without notice or sound of broken bough, suddenly he stood outside on the left—almost beneath the gun's muzzle—not eight feet away. Luckily (as he stood within my firing-lines) the boar steadfastly gazed in the opposite direction, nor did I seek by slightest movement to attract attention to my presence. For some seconds we both remained thus, rigid. Then with sudden decision the boar bounded off, flying the gentle slope in front, and ere he had passed a yard clear of the firing-line, fell dead with a bullet placed in the precise spot.

Weight, 164 lbs. clean, and grey as a donkey.

A wounded boar should always be approached with caution. Remember he is a powerful brute, very resolute, and furnished with quite formidable armament, which, while life remains, he will use. One of the biggest, after receiving a bullet slightly below and behind the heart, went slowly on some fifty yards, when he subsided, back up, among some green iris. Half an hour later the writer silently approached from directly behind. At ten yards the heaving flanks showed that plenty of life remained, and beautiful scimitar-like tushes were conspicuous enough on either side. I therefore quietly withdrew. On a keeper presently riding up, the boar at once dashed on a dog, flung him aside (laying open half his ribs), and charged the horse. The latter was smartly handled and cleared, when the boar instantly turned on

me. The dash of that onset was splendid to watch. Luckily he had a yard or two of soft bog to get through, but it was necessary to stop him with another bullet.

Impressive is the mental sensation aroused when any savage wild-beast—normally the object of pursuit—suddenly turns the tables and becomes the aggressor. The actual incident is necessarily but momentary, yet its effect remains graven on the tablets of memory. Pity 'tis so rare.

Again we conclude with an independent impression by J. C. C. :—

Never a visit to the Coto Doñana but brings some separate experience—possibly more pleasurable in retrospect than reality! I will instance my first interview with wild-boars. Now, of course, I know more about them and can almost regard them with serenity; but at that time, believe me, it was not so. That first encounter at really close quarters occurred at the close of a long day's work. My post was behind a twelve-inch pine on an otherwise bare hill, the reverse slope of which dipped down to dense bamboo-thickets just out of my sight, though close by. Within a few minutes commenced and continued the hullabaloo of hounds. Close glued to my pine-trunk I listened in tense excitement. Suddenly, ere I had quite realised such possibility, there rushed into view on the ridge, not twenty paces distant, a great shaggy grey boar. He had dashed up the steep bank beyond and was now making direct for my legs. This is not the confession of a nervous man, but it did occur to me that truer safety lay in the *fork* of my tree! but B. was the next gun, only sixty or seventy yards away, and keenly interested. In a moment I was myself again; but the interval had been, to say the least, painfully enthralling. I had, of course, to wait till the great "Havato" had crossed my "firing-lines." He certainly saw *something*, for he paused momentarily, took rapid counsel, and bolted past. Nerves were steady now, and once across the line the boar had my right in the ribs, left in flank. I actually saw blood spurt—hair fly—at each shot, yet the boar followed on his course unmoved. Pachydermatous pig! I pondered while reloading. Ten seconds later on my boar's sleuth follows *Boca-Negra*, a veritable Beth Gelert. Utterly ignoring me, he passes away into gloom and silence; but shortly I see him coming back, blood-stained and satiated, and my self-respect returns. Ten minutes later, a second tusker gallops along the hollow behind. Him also my right caught fair in the ribs—only a few inches left of the heart, yet again without visible result. The second bullet, however, broke his spine as he ascended the sand-bank beyond, and he fell stone dead. When the beat was over we followed No. 1. He also lay still, 200 yards away—a pair of first-rate tuskers.

I remember, during the gralloch, some dreadfully poor charcoal-burners appearing on the scene to beg for food. This, of course, was gladly conceded; but so famished were those poor creatures that old women filled their aprons with reeking viscera, while it was with difficulty that children could be prevented from starting at once on raw flesh and liver. Truly it was a grievous spectacle, and filled the homeward ride with sad reflections on the awful hardships such poor folk are destined to endure.

BOLTED PAST

In days of rapid change, when, in our own generation, sporting weapons have been at least thrice utterly metamorphosed, it is unwise to be dogmatic. Yet we may summarise our personal experience that the most efficient weapon for all such purposes as here described is that known as the "Paradox," or at least of the Paradox type. The old "Express rifle" (the best in its day, less than a score of years ago, but now mere "scrap") was also useful. But it always fell second to the Paradox, as the latter (being really a shot-gun, equally available for small game, snipe, duck, or geese) came up quicker to the eye for snap-shooting with ball.

The invention of the Paradox type of gun has practically introduced a third style of shooting where there previously existed only two, to wit:—

(1) Gun-shooting with *shot* where any "aim" or even an apology for an aim is fatal to modern maximum success.

(2) Rifle-shooting proper, which must be mechanical and deliberate—the more so, the more effective.

(3) Thirdly, we have this new system intermediate between the two—"gun-shooting with ball."

Using the Paradox as a rifle, an alignment *must* be taken; but it may be taken as with a *gun*, and not necessarily the deliberate and mechanical alignment essential with a rifle, properly so called.

In short, with a Paradox, always glance along the sights. You will nearly always find that some "refinement" of aim is required. More words are useless.

One word as to the "forward allowance" needed after the rough alignment (as explained) has been effected. At short snapshot ranges none is required. At a galloping stag at 50 yards, the sights should clear his chest; at 100 yards, half-a-length ahead, and double that for 150 yards. At these longer ranges one instinctively allows for "drop" by taking a fuller sight. For standing shots, of course, the back-sights can be used.

Boar-Hunting by Moonlight (Estremadura)

"*Caceria á la Ronda.*"

This picturesque and altogether break-neck style of hunting the boar—a style perhaps more consonant than "driving" with popular notions of the dash and chivalry of Spanish character—still survives in the wild province of Estremadura. No species of sport in our experience will compare with the *Ronda* for danger and sheer recklessness unless it be that of "riding lions" to a stand, as practised on British East African plains.[1]

Years ago we described this system of the *Ronda* in the "Big-Game" volumes of the Badminton Library, and here write a new account, correcting some slight errors which had crept into the earlier article.

This sport is practised by moonlight at that period of the autumn called the *Montanera*, when acorns and chestnuts fall

[1] See *On Safari*, by Abel Chapman, pp. 216-17. The Spanish term *Ronda* may roughly be translated as "rounding-up."

from the trees, and when droves of domestic swine are turned loose into the woods to feed on these wild fruits. At that date the wild-boars also are in the habit of descending from the adjacent sierras, and wander far and wide over the wooded plains in search of that favourite food.

When the acorns fall thus and ripe chestnuts strew the ground in these magnificent Estremenian forests, the young bloods of the district assemble to await the arrival of the boars upon the lower ground. Two kinds of dog are employed : the ordinary *podencos*, which run free ; and the *alanos*, a breed of rough-haired "seizers," crossed between bull-dog and mastiff—these latter being held in leash.

Sallying forth at midnight, so soon as the *podencos* give tongue, the *alanos* are slipped in order to "hold-up" the flying boar till the horsemen can reach the spot.

Then for a while hound-music frightens the darkness and shocks the silence of the sleeping woods ; there is crashing among dry forest-scrub, a breakneck scurry of mounted men among the timber, until the furious baying of the hounds and the noisy rush of the hunters converge towards one dark point among the shadows, and in the half-light a great grisly tusker dies beneath the cold steel, but not before he has written a lasting record on the hide of some luckless hound.

A stiff neck and bold heart are essential to these dare-devil gallops, where each horse and horseman vie in reckless rivalry, flying through bush and brake, and under overhung boughs difficult to distinguish amid moon-rays intercepted by foliage above. Accidents of course occur—an odd collar-bone or two hardly count, but what does annoy is when by mistake some wretched beast of domestic race is found held up by the excited pack.

CHAPTER VII

"OUR LADY OF THE DEW"

THE PILGRIMAGE TO THE SHRINE OF NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL ROCÍO

Pilgrimages by the pious to distant shrines are a well-known phase in the faith both of the Moslem and of the Romish Church, and require no definition by us; but one that is yearly performed to a tiny and isolated shrine not a dozen miles from our shooting-lodge of Doñana deserves description.

First as to its origin. Twelve hundred years ago when Arab conquerors overran Spain much treasure of the churches, with many sacred emblems, relics, etc., were hurriedly concealed in places of safety. But not unnaturally, since Moorish domination extended over 700 years, all trace or record of such hiding-places had long been lost, and it was merely by chance and one by one that, after the Reconquest, the hidden treasures were rediscovered.

The story of the recovery of our Lady of the Dew is related to have occurred in this wise. A shepherd tending his flocks in the neighbourhood of Almonte was induced by the strangely excited barking of his dog to force a way into the dense thickets known as La Rocina de la Madre (a wooded swamp, famous as a breeding-place of the smaller herons, egrets, and ibises), in the midst of which the dog led him to an ancient hollowed tree. Here, half-hidden in the cavernous trunk, the shepherd espied the figure of "a Virgin of rare beauty and of exquisite carving," clothed in a tunic of what had been white linen, but now stained dull green through centuries of exposure to the weather and dew (*rocío*).

Overjoyed, the shepherd, bearing the Virgin on his shoulders, set out for Almonte, distant three leagues; but being overcome by fatigue and the weight of his burden, he lay down to rest by

the way and fell asleep. On awakening he found the Virgin had gone—she had returned to her hollow tree. Having ascertained this, and being now filled with fear, he proceeded alone to Almonte, where he reported his discovery. At once the Alcalde and clergy accompanied him to the spot, and finding the image as related, a vow was then and there solemnised that a shrine, dedicated to N. S. del Rocío, should be erected at the very spot.

On its being discovered that this Virgin was able to perform miracles and to grant petitions, her fame soon spread afar, and religious fervour waxed strong. Thus during the plague of 1649-50, the Virgin having been removed to Almonte as a safeguard, the inhabitants of that place were immune from the pestilence, though every other hamlet was decimated. A second miracle was attributed to the Virgin. Hard by the shrine at Rocío was a spring of water, but of such poor supply that ordinarily a single man could empty it within two hours: yet during the three days of the pilgrimage thousands of men and their horses could all assuage their thirst.

Owing to these manifestations devout persons endowed the Virgin of Rocío with considerable sums of money, with which a larger shrine was built, while sumptuous garments, laces, and embroidery, with jewelry and precious stones, were provided for her adornment. In addition to this, Replicas of the original effigy were made and distributed around the villages of the neighbourhood, particularly the following:—

	Kilos.		Kilos.
Palma, distant . . .	32	San Lucar, distant . .	45
Moguer „ . . .	30	Villamanrique „ . .	18
Umbrete „ . . .	45	Pilas „ . .	23
Huelva „ . . .	65	Almonte „ . .	17
Triana „ . . .	76	Coria „ . .	44
Rota „ . . .	55		

At each of these and other places, "Brotherhoods" (*Hermandades*), affiliated to the original at Rocío, were established to guard these effigies; and it is from these points that every Whitsuntide the various pilgrim-fraternities journey forth across the wastes towards Rocío, each Brotherhood bringing its own carved replica to pay its annual homage to its carved prototype.

In the spring of 1910 the authors attended the *Fiesta*. Already, the night before, premonitory symptoms—the tuning-up

of fife and drum had been audible, and during the twelve-mile ride next morning fresh contingents winding through the scrub-clad plain were constantly sighted, all converging upon Rocío. It was not, however, till reaching that hamlet that the full extent of the pilgrimage became apparent, and a striking and characteristic spectacle it formed. From every point of the compass were descried long files of white-tilted ox-waggons—hundreds of them—slowly advancing across the flower-starred plain; the waggons all bedecked in gala style, crammed to the last seat with guitar-touching girls, with smiling duennas and attendant squires; the ox-teams gaily caparisoned, and escorted by prancing cavaliers, many with wife or daughter mounted pillion-wise behind, while younger pilgrims challenged impromptu trials of speed—a series of minor steeplechases. There were four-in-hand brakes, mule-teams and donkey-carts, pious pedestrians—a motley parade enveloped in clouds of dust and noise, but all in perfect order.

The following quaint description was written down for us by a Spanish friend who accompanied us:-

> It is at the entry of the various processions that the most striking and picturesque effects are produced by the cavalcade. Here one sees displayed the grace and ability of the Amazon—the robust and comely Andalucian maiden, carried *á ancas* (pillion-wise) at the back of his saddle by gallant cavalier proud of his gentle companion, and exhibiting to advantage his skill in horsemanship. The noble steed, conscious of its onerous part, carries the double burden with care and spirit, being trained to curvet and rear in all the bravery of mediæval and Saracenic age.

About 4 P.M., while the converging caravans were yet a mile or so afield, all halted, each to organise its own procession, and each headed by the waggon bearing its own Virgin bedecked in gorgeous apparels of silk and silver braid. Then to the accompaniment of bands and bell-ringing, hand-clapping and castanets, drum, tambourine, and guitar, with flags flying and steeds curvetting, this singular combination of religious rite with musical fantasia resumed its advance into the village.

Despite the dust and crush not a unit but held its assigned position, and thus—one long procession succeeding another—the whole concourse filed into the village, crossed its narrow green, and sought the shrine where, within the open doors, the Virgin of Rocío, removed from the altar, was placed to receive the

homage of the Brotherhoods. As each Replica reached the spot, its bearers halted and knelt, while expert drivers even made their ox-teams kneel down in submission before the "Queen of Heaven and Earth." There was but a moment's delay, nor did castanets and song cease for an instant. Later in the evening came the processions of the Rosário, when each of the visiting Brotherhoods make a ceremonious call upon the Senior Brother—that is, the Hermit of Rocío—after which each confraternity, with less ceremony but more joviality, visited the camps of the others. This last was accompanied by bands, massed choirs, and *fireworks*. Then the festival resolved itself, so far as we could judge, into a purely secular affair—feasting, merry-making, dancing, till far on in the night.

Rain had set in at dusk and was now falling fast. Rocío is but a tiny hamlet—say two score of humble cots—yet to-night 6000 people occupied it, the womenfolk sleeping inside their canvas-tilted ox-waggons, the men lying promiscuously on the ground beneath.

Sunday is occupied with religious ceremonies, beginning with High Mass. These we will not attempt to describe—nor could we if we would. The Spanish friend who at our request jotted down some notes on the *Fiesta* uses the following expressions :—

> The days of the Rocío are days of expansion, merry-making, animation. Never, throughout the festival, ceases the laughter of joyous voices, the clang of the castanets, the melody of guitar and tambourine. Dances, song, and music, with jovial intercourse and good fellowship, all unite to preserve unflagging the rejoicing which is cultivated at that beautiful spot. At this festival many traders assist with different installations, including jewellers in the porch of the church, vendors of medallions, photographs, coloured ribbons, and other articles dedicated to the patroness of a festival which is well worthy a visit for its originality and bewitchment.

On the Monday morning, after joint attendance of all the Brotherhoods at Mass, followed by a sermon, the image of the Virgin is formally replaced upon the altar (the feet resting upon the same hollow trunk in which the figure was first found), then the processions are reformed and the long homeward journey to their respective destinations begins.

Although many thousands of people yearly attend this festival, all entirely uncontrolled by any authority, yet quarrels and disturbance are unknown. The mere cry of "viva la

Virgen" suffices at once to appease incipient angers, should such arise. Thousands of horses and donkeys, moreover, are allowed to roam about untended and unguarded, as there is no danger of their being stolen.

The Virgin of the Rocío, it appears, specialises in accidents, and many votive pictures hung within the shrine illustrate the nature of her miracles. One man is depicted falling headlong from a fifth-storey window, another from a lofty pine, a third drowning in a torrential flood; a lady is thrown by a mule, another run over by a cart, a lad caught by an infuriated bull; a beatific-looking person stands harmless amidst fiery forked lightning—apparently enjoying it. From all these and other appalling forms of death, the survivors, having been saved by the Virgin's miraculous interposition, have piously contributed pictorial evidence of the various occurrences.

A somewhat gruesome relic records the incident that a mother having vowed that should her daughter be restored to life, she should walk to Rocío in her grave-clothes—and there the said clothes lie as evidence of that miracle.

The festival above described is celebrated each spring at Pentecost. There is, however, a second yearly pilgrimage into Rocío which originated in this wise.

In 1810 when the French occupied this country, the village of Almonte was held by two troops of cavalry who were engaged in impressing recruits from among the neighbouring peasantry. These naturally objected to serve the enemy, but many were terrorised into obedience. Bolder spirits there were, however, and these, to the number of thirty-six, resolved to strike a blow for freedom. Having assembled in the thick woods outside Almonte, at two o'clock one afternoon they fell upon the unsuspecting French and, ere these could defend themselves, many were killed and others made prisoners. Finally the French commander was shot dead on his own doorstep. "The villagers of Almonte were horrified at what had occurred, for although they had had no hand in the matter, they felt sure they would have to bear the blame"—so runs a Spanish account.

The few French troopers who had escaped fled to Seville, reported the affair, and (wrongly) incriminated the villagers of Almonte—precisely as those worthies had foreseen. The General

commanding at Seville ordered that Almonte should be razed to the ground and its inhabitants beheaded—that being the penalty decreed by Murat for any shedding of French blood. A detachment of dragoons, despatched to Almonte, had already taken prisoner the mayor, the priests, and all the chief inhabitants preparatory to their execution. In this grave situation they bethought themselves to pray to the Virgin of Rocío, promising that if she would rescue them from their deadly peril, they would institute a new pilgrimage to her shrine for thanksgiving.

Already the detachment of French soldiers detailed to carry out the executions had reached Pilas, a village within six leagues of Almonte, when, by mere coincidence, a handful of Spanish troops flung themselves against the French positions at Seville. The French, thinking that their assailants must be the forerunners of a larger army, hurriedly recalled all their outposts, including those commissioned to destroy Almonte!

Thus the wretched Alcalde and his fellow-prisoners were saved; for, their innocence of the "crime" being presently established, the town was let off with a fine. Since then, in accordance with the promise made 100 years ago, the whole of Almonte repairs every 7th of August to the shrine of Nuestra Señora del Rocío.

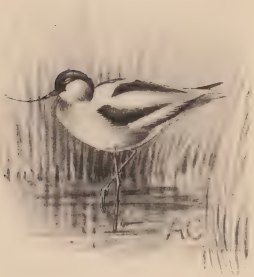
PRAYING MANTIS (*Mantis religiosa*)

CHAPTER VIII

THE MARISMAS OF GUADALQUIVÍR

THE DELTA

From Seville to the Atlantic the great river Guadalquivir pursues its course through seventy miles of alluvial mud-flats entirely of its own construction. The whole of this viewless waste (in winter largely submerged) is technically termed the marisma; but its upper regions, slightly higher-lying, have proved amenable to a limited dominion of man, and nowadays comprise (besides some rich corn-lands) broad pasturages devoted to grazing, and which yield *Toros bravos*, that is, fighting-bulls of breeds celebrated throughout Spain, as providing the popular champions of the Plaza.



AVOCET

It is not of these developed regions that we treat, but of the Lower Delta, which still remains a wilderness, and must for centuries remain so—a vast area of semi-tidal saline ooze and marsh, extending over some forty or fifty miles in length, and spreading out laterally to untold leagues on either side of the river.

This Lower Delta, the marisma proper, while it varies here and there by a few inches in elevation, is practically a uniform dead-level of alluvial mud, only broken by *vetas*, or low grass-grown ridges seldom rising more than a foot or two above the

flat, and which vary in extent from a few yards to hundreds of acres. The precise geological cause of these *vetas* we know not; but the calcareous matter of which they are composed—the debris of myriad disintegrated sea-shells, mostly bivalves—proves that the ocean at an earlier period held sway, till gradually driven backwards by the torrents of alluvial matter carried down by the river, and finally forced behind the vast sand-barrier now known as the Coto Doñana—the buffer called into being whilst age-long struggles raged between these two opposing forces. The fact is further evidenced by the salt crust which yearly forms on the surface of the lower marisma when the summer sun has evaporated its waters.

In summer the marisma is practically a sun-scorched mud-flat; in winter a shallow inland sea, with the *vetas* standing out like islands.

There are, as already stated, slight local variations in elevation. Naturally the lower-lying areas are the first to retain moisture so soon as the long torrid summer has passed away and autumn rains begin. Speedily these become shallow lagoons, termed *lucios*—similar, we imagine, to the *jheels* of India—and a welcome haven they afford to the advance-guard of immigrant wildfowl from the north.

Plant-life in the marismas is regulated by the relative saltness of the soil. In the deeper *lucios* no vegetation can subsist; but where the level rises, though but a few inches, and the ground is less saline, the hardy samphire (in Spanish, *armajo*) appears, covering with its small isolated bushes vast stretches of the lower marisma.

The *armajo*, which is formed of a congeries of fleshy twigs, leafless, and jointed more like the marine *algae* than a land-plant, belongs to three species as follows:—

(1) *Salicornea herbacea*, marsh-samphire; in Spanish, *Sapina*.
(2) *Arthraenimum fruticosum*
(3) *Suaeda fruticosa*
} in Spanish, *Armajo*.

All three belong to the natural order *Chenopodiaceae* (or "Goose-foot" family).

The *armajo* is the typical plant of the marisma, flourishing even where there is a considerable percentage of salt in the soil. This aquatic shrub increases most in dry seasons, a series of wet winters having a disastrous effect on its growth. The *Sapina*,

above mentioned, has a curious effect when eaten by mares (which is often the case when other food is scarce) of inducing a form of intoxication from which many die. Indeed, the deaths from *Ensapinadas* represent a serious loss to horse-breeders whose mares are sent to graze in the marismas. Cattle are not affected.

SAMPHIRE

Formerly the *Sapina* possessed a commercial value, being used (owing to its alkaline qualities) in the manufacture of soap. Nowadays it is replaced by other chemicals.

Here and there, owing to some imperceptible gradient, the marisma is traversed by broad channels called *caños*, where, by reason of the water having a definite flow, the soil has become less saline. The *armajo* at such spots becomes scarce or disappears altogether, its place being taken by quite different plants, namely: Spear-grass (*Cyperus*), *Candilejo*, *Bayunco*, the English names of which we do not know.

Efforts have been made from time to time to reclaim and utilise portions of the marisma by draining the water to the river; but failure has invariably resulted for the following reasons:

(1) The intense saltness of the soil.

(2) That the marisma lies largely on a lower level than the river banks.

(3) The river being tidal, its water is salt or brackish.

There are vast areas of far better land in Spain which might be reclaimed with certainty and at infinitely less cost.

The only human inhabitants of the marisma are a few herdsmen whose reed-built huts are scattered on remote *cotas*. There are also the professional wildfowlers with their *cabresto*-ponies: but this class is disappearing as, bit by bit, the system of "preservation" extends over the wastes. Though the climate is healthy enough except for a period just preceding the autumn rains, yet our keepers and most of those who live here permanently are terrible sufferers from malaria. Quinine, they tell us, costs as much as bread in the family economy.

We quote the following impression from *Wild Spain*, p. 78:

> The utter loneliness and desolation of the middle marismas call forth sensations one does not forget. Hour after hour one pushes forward

Gunning-punt in the Marisma.
(Note the half-submerged samphire-bushes.)

Wild-Goose shooting on the Sandhills.
(Note tin decoys, also some natural geese.)

Vasquez approaching Wildfowl with Carresto-Pony.

across a flooded plain only to bring within view more and yet more vistas of watery waste and endless horizons of tawny water. On a low islet at farthest distance stand a herd of cattle—mere points in space; but these, too, partake of the general wildness and splash off at a gallop while yet a mile away. Even the wild-bred horses and ponies of the marisma revert to an aboriginal anthropophobia, and become as shy and timid as the *ferae naturae* themselves. After long days in this monotony, wearied eyes at length rejoice at a vision of trees—a dark-green pine-grove casting grateful shade on scorching sands beneath. To that oasis we direct our course, but it proves a fraud, one of nature's cruel mockeries—a mirage. Not a tree grows on that spot, or within leagues of it, nor has done for ages—perhaps since time began.

Such is the physical character of the marisma, so far as we can describe it. The general landscape in winter is decidedly dreary and somewhat deceptive, since the vast areas of brown *armajos* lend an appearance of dry land where none exists, since those plants are growing in, say, a foot or two of water—"a floating forest paints the wave." The monotony is broken at intervals by the reed-fringed *caños*, or sluggish channels, and by the *lucios*, big and little—the latter partially sprinkled with *armajo*-growth, the bigger sheets open water, save that, as a rule, their surface is carpeted with wildfowl.

Should our attempted description read vague, we may plead that there is nothing tangible to describe in a wilderness devoid of salient feature. Nor can we liken it with any other spot, for nowhere on earth have we met with a region like this—nominally dry all summer and inundated all winter, yet subject to such infinite variation according to varying seasons. It is not, however, the marisma itself that during all these years has absorbed our interest and energies—no, that dreary zone would offer but little attraction were it not for its feathered inhabitants. These, the winter wildfowl, challenge the world to afford such display of winged and web-footed folk, and it is these we now endeavour to describe.

By mid-September, as a rule, the first signs of the approaching invasion of north-bred wildfowl become apparent. But if, as often happens, the long summer drought yet remains unbroken, these earlier arrivals, finding the marisma untenable, are constrained to take to the river, or to pass on into Africa.

Should the dry weather extend into October, the only ducks to remain permanently in any great numbers are the teal, the

few big ducks then shot being either immature or in poor condition, from which it may be inferred that the main bodies of all species have passed on to more congenial regions.

About the 25th September the first greylag geese appear. These are not affected by the scarcity of water in any such degree as ducks, since they only need to drink twice a day, morning and evening, and make shift to subsist by digging up the bulb-like roots of the spear-grass with their powerful bills.

GREYLAG GEESE

But so soon as autumn rains have fallen, and the whole marisma has become supplied with "new water," it at once fills up with wildfowl—ducks and geese—in such variety and prodigious quantities as we endeavour to describe in the following sketches.

Wildfowl—'twixt Cup and Lip

Wildfowl beyond all the rest of animated nature lend themselves to spectacular display. For their enormous aggregations (due as much to concentration within restricted haunts, as to gregarious instinct, and to both these causes combined) are always openly visible and conspicuous inasmuch as those haunts are, in all lands, confined to shallow water and level marsh devoid of cover or concealment.

Thus, wherever they congregate in their thousands and tens of thousands, wildfowl are always in view—that is, to those who seek them out in their solitudes. This last, however, is an important proviso. For the haunts aforesaid are precisely those areas of the earth's surface which are the most repugnant to man, and least suited to his existence.

In crowded England there survive but few of those dreary

estuaries where miles of oozy mud-flats separate sea and land, treacherous of foot-hold, exposed to tide-ways and to every gale that blows. Such only are the haunts of British wildfowl, though how many men in a million have ever seen them? To wilder Spain, with its 50 per cent of waste, and its vast irreclaimed marismas, come the web-footed race in quantities undreamt at home.

We have before attempted to describe such scenes, though a fear that we might be discredited oft half paralysed the pen. An American critic of our former book remarked that it "left the gaping reader with a feeling that he had not been told half." That lurking fear could not be better explained. A dread of Munchausenism verily gives pause in writing even of what one has seen again and again, raising doubts of one's own eye-sight and of the pencilled notes that, year after year, we had scrupulously written down on the spot.

The Baetican marisma has afforded many of those scenes of wild-life that, for the reason stated, were before but half-described. With fuller experience we return to the subject, though daring not entirely to satisfy our trans-Atlantic friend.

The winter of 1896 provided such an occasion. It was on the 26th of November that, under summer conditions, we rode out, where in other years we have sailed, across what should have been water, but was now a calcined plain.

November was nearly past; autumn had given place to winter, yet not a drop of rain had fallen. Since the scorching days of July the fountains of heaven had been stayed, and now the winter wildfowl from the north had poured in only to find the marisma as hard and arid as the deserts of Arabia Petraea. Instinct was at fault. True, each to their appointed seasons, had come, the dark clouds of pintail, teal, and wigeon, the long skeins of grey geese. Where in other years they had revelled in shallows rich in aquatic vegetation, now the travellers find instead nought but torrid plains devoid of all that is attractive to the tastes of their tribe. For the parched soil, whose life-blood has been drained by the heats of the summer solstice, whose plant-life is burnt up, has remained panting all the autumn through for that precious moisture that still comes not. The carcases of horses and cattle, that have died from thirst and lack of pasturage, strew the plains; the winter-sown wheat is dead ere germination is complete.

In such years of drought many of the newly arrived wildfowl, especially pintails, pass on southwards (into Africa), not to return till February. The remainder crowd into the few places where the precious element water still exists. Such are the rare pools that are fed from quicksands (*ancles*) or permanent land-springs (*ojos*) and a few of the larger and deeper *lucios* of the marisma.

Riding through stretches of shrivelled samphire we frequently spring deer, driven out here, miles from their forest-haunts, by the eager search for water.

Approaching the first of the great *lucios*, or permanent pools,

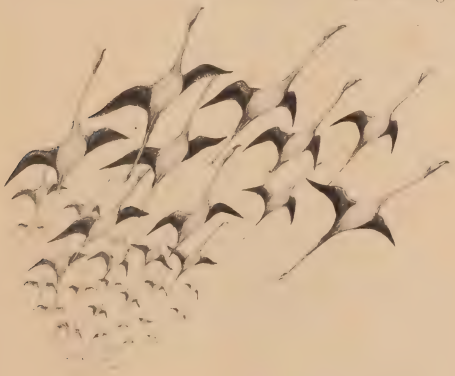
WHITE-EYED POCHARD (*Fuligula nyroca*)

a wondrous sight lay before our eyes. This water might extend for three or four miles, but was literally concealed by the crowds of flamingoes that covered its surface. For a moment it was difficult to believe that those pink and white leagues would really be all composed of living creatures. Their identity, however, became clear enough when, within 600 yards, we could distinguish the scattered outposts gradually concentrating upon the solid ranks beyond. Disbelieve it if you will, but four fairly sane Englishmen estimated that crowd, when a rifle-shot set them on wing, to exceed ten thousand units—by how much, we decline to guess.

The nearer shores, with every creek and channel, were darkened

by masses of ducks, huddled together like dusky islets; while further away several army-corps of geese were striving, with sonorous gabble, to tear up tuberous roots of spear-grass (*castañuela*) from sun-baked mud.

It was a rifle-shot at these last that finally set the whole host on wing—an indescribable spectacle, hurrying hordes everywhere outflanked by the glinting black and pink glamour of flamingoes. Then the noise—the reverberating roar of wings, blending with



"FLAMINGOES OVER"

a babel of croaks and gabblings, whistles and querulous pipes, punctuated by shriller bi-tones, . . . we give that up.

A long ride in prospect precluded serious operations to-night, but towards dusk we lined out our four guns, and in half an hour loaded up the panniers of the carrier-ponies with nearly three score ducks and geese.

An hour before the morning's dawn we were in position to await the earliest geese. Experience had taught the chief flight-lines, and these, over many miles of marsh, were commanded by lines of sunken tubs. These, however, the exceptional conditions had rendered temporarily useless. Our tubs lay miles

from water; hence each man had to hide as best he could, prostrate behind rush-tuft or twelve-inch samphire.

This morning, however, the greylags flew wide and scattered, in strange contrast with their customary regularity. We noticed the change, but knew not the cause. The geese did. The barometer during the night (unnoticed by us at 4 A.M.) had gone down half an inch, and already, as we assembled for breakfast at ten o'clock, rain was beginning to fall—the first rain since the spring! The wind, which for weeks had remained "nailed to the North—*norte clavado*," in Spanish phrase—flew to all airts, and a change was at hand. By eleven there burst what the Spanish

POCHARD (*Fuligula ferina*)

well name a *tormenta*; lightning flashed from a darkened sky, while thunder rolled overhead, and rain drove horizontal on a living hurricane. An hour later the heavens cleared, and the sun was shining as before. That short and sudden storm, however, had marked an epoch. The whole conditions of bird-life in the marisma had been revolutionised within a couple of hours.

In other years, under such conditions as this morning had promised, we have records of sixty and eighty greylags brought to bag, and it was with such anticipation that we had set out to-day. The result totalled but a quarter of such numbers.

Ducks came next in our programme, and the writer, being the last gun by lot, had several miles to ride to his remote post at El Hondón. The scenes in bird-life through which we rode

amazed even accustomed eyes. At intervals as we advanced across mud-flats clad in low growth of rush and samphire, rose for a mile across our front such crowds of wigeon and teal that the landscape ahead appeared a quivering horizon of wings that shimmered like a heat-haze.

Crouching behind a low breastwork, before me lay a five-acre pool which no amount of firing ever kept quite clear of swimming forms, so fast did thirsty duck, teal, and geese keep dropping in, since behind for twenty leagues stretched waterless plain.

Merely to make a bag under such conditions means taking every chance, firing away till barrels grow too hot to hold. Here, however, that nature-love that overrides even a fowler's keenness stepped in. With half the wildfowl of Europe flashing, wheeling,

and alighting within view—many, one fondly imagined, likely to be of supreme interest—the writer cannot personally go on taking single mallards, teal, or wigeon, one after another in superb but almost monotonous rapidity. For the moment, in fact, the naturalist supplants the gunner. True, this may be sacrificing the mutton to the shadow, and this afternoon no special prize rewarded self-denial in letting pass many a tempting chance.

For gratifying indeed to fowler's pride it is to pull down in falling heap the smart pintails and brilliant shovelers, to bring off a right-and-left at geese, though, it may be, one had first to let a cloud of wigeon pass the silent muzzle. Such is individual taste, nor will the memory of that afternoon ever fade, although my score, when at 3.30 P.M. I was recalled, only totalled up to seventy-four ducks and four greylag geese.

The recall was imperative, and I obeyed, though not without hesitation and doubt. Could earth provide a better place?

"Yes," replies Vasquez, "in one hour the geese will be streaming in clouds up the Algaidilla and Caño Juncero. Come! there's no time to lose." Within an hour we had reached the spot. The water was four inches deep, with low cover of rushes. The revolving stool stood too high, so I knelt in the shallow, and within three minutes the first squad of geese came in quite straight. One I took kneeling, but had to jump for the second. Just as No. 2 collapsed, No. 1 caught me full amidships, knocking me sidelong and, rebounding, upset the stool and the bag of cartridges thereon! A nice mess, occurring at the very outset of

WILD GEESE ALIGHTING AT FIFTEEN YARDS

(Take the upper pair right-and-left, leaving the nearer geese for second gun.)

one of those ambrosial half-hours seldom realised outside of dreams. Quickly I dried the cartridges as well as circumstances would admit, for pack after pack of geese hurled themselves gaggling and honking right in my face, and during the few brief minutes of the southern twilight, I reckoned I had twenty-three down—seven right-and-lefts—though in the darkness only seventeen could be gathered, the winged all necessarily escaping.

Within thirty-six hours we had secured sixty-two geese and over two hundred ducks. For four guns, under favouring conditions, this would have been no very special result; but to-day the fowl were all alert and restless at the prospect of a coming change. The keynote had already been sounded that first day, when the *tormenta* burst, and when the long drought ended on the very

morning we had selected to commence our operations. Had the weather held for a single week . . . but why dwell on it? The point must be clear enough. No more geese were got that year.

Let us conclude with a few ornithological observations made during succeeding days. On November 30, after three days of stormy weather, with tremendous bursts of rainfall, there commenced one of the most remarkable bird-migrations we have witnessed. From early morn till night (and all the following day) cloud upon cloud of ducks kept streaming overhead from the westward. Frequently a score of packs would be in view at once —never were the heavens clear; and all coming from precisely the same direction and travelling in parallel lines to the east. Their course seemed to indicate that these migrants (avoiding the overland route across Spain which would involve passing over her great cordilleras, say 10,000 feet) had travelled south by the coast-line as far as the latitude of Cape St. Vincent. Thence they "hauled their wind" and bore up on an easterly course which brought them direct into the great marismas of the Guadalquivir.[1]

Las Nuevas

We had acquired this waste of marsh and mud-flat and were keen to "go and possess it." Initial difficulties arose to confront us. Though the whole region now belonged to us (*i.e.* the rights of chase, and it boasts but little other value) yet our possession was to be met by some opposition.

It was all very natural, delightfully human, and despite the annoyance, captivated our sympathy. Local fowlers, accustomed from immemorial times to earn a scant living by shooting for market the wildfowl of the wilderness, resented this acquisition of exclusive rights. Our scattered guards were overawed, our reed-built huts were burned, and threats reached us—not to mention a casual bullet or two ricochetting in wild bounds across the watery waste. That one quality, however, above mentioned—sympathy—is the passport to Spanish hearts, and

[1] At the date in question (end of November) it is, of course, possible that this immigration was proceeding, not from the north, but from the south. That is, that these were fowl which, on their first arrival in Spain in September and October, had found the *marisma* untenable from lack of water, and had in consequence passed on into Africa, whence they were now returning, on the changed weather. But be that as it may, the route above indicated is that invariably followed by the north-bred wildfowl on their first arrival in Spain.

thereby, together with courtesy and fair-dealing, the erstwhile insurgents in brief time became the best of friends.

For the moment, however, we found ourselves hutless, and constrained to encamp two leagues away on the distant *terra firma*, this involving an extra couple of hours' work in the small dark hours.

As before 4 A.M. we rode, beneath a pouring rain, "path-finding," in blind darkness across slimy ooze and shallow —not to mention deeper channels that reached to the girths, a nightjar circled round our cavalcade — true, a very small event, but recorded because it is quite against the rules for a nightjar to be here in December. Only three guns braved this adventure, and by 5.45 we occupied each his allotted post. These could not be called comfortable, since the positions in which we had to spend the next six or eight hours were quite six inches deep in water, and the only covert a circle of samphire-bush barely a foot above water-level—that being the utmost height allowed by the keen sight of flighting fowl. Each man had an armful of cut brush-wood to kneel on, besides another bundle on which cartridge-bags might be supported clear of the water.[1]

Rain descended in sheets. Before it was fully light—indeed the average human being of diurnal habit would probably swear it was still quite dark—the swish of wings overhead foretold the coming day. Then with a roar the whole marisma bursts into life as though by clock-work. Thrice-a-minute, and oftener, sped bunches of duck right in one's face, at times a hurricane of wings. Not seeing them till quite close in, but one barrel can be emptied each time, yet soon a score of beautiful pintail and wigeon formed the basis of a pile.

Behind, in the gloom to westward, a sense of movement has developed. At first it might have been but the drift of night-clouds, but as light broadens, form and colour evolve and the phenomenon shapes itself into vast bodies of flamingoes, sprawling, as it were, on the face of heaven in writhing, scintillating confusion. After infinite evolutions, the amorphous mass resolves itself into order; files and marshalled phalanxes serry the sky—those weird wildfowl, each with some six foot of rigid extension, advancing direct upon our posts. Their armies have spent the night on the broad

[1] This was in earlier days. Later on we developed a flotilla of flat-bottomed canoes expressly adapted to this service. A photo of one of these is annexed.

lucios of El Desierto, and now head away towards feeding-grounds outside. Arrayed line beyond line in echelon, ten thousand pinions beat, in unison—beat in short, sharp strokes from the elbow. The fantasy of form amazes; the flash of contrasted colour as the first sun-rays strike on black, white, and vermilion. One may have witnessed this spectacle a score of times, yet never does it pall or leave one without a sense that here nature has treated us to one of her wildest creations. No rude sketch of ours—possibly not the best that art can produce—will ever convey the effect of these quaint forms in vast moving agglomeration. Long after they have vanished in space, one remains entranced with the glamour of the scene.

WILDFOWL IN THE MARISMA

The flamingoes have passed away, but the lightening skies are still streaked and serried. Most numerous are the wigeon, millions of them in hurrying phalanxes, white specks flanged with dark wings, too well known to describe; pintails (this wet winter hardly less numerous), readily distinguishable by their longer build and stately grace of flight; the dark heads and snowy necks of the drakes conspicuous afar. The arrow-like course of the shoveler, along with his vibrant wing-beats and incessant call, "zook, zook, tsook, tsook," identify that species; while gadwall, more sombre in tone than the mallards, "talk" in distinctive style; and mob-like masses of teal and marbled ducks sweep along the open channels. Then there are the diving-ducks with harsh corvine croaks, pochards, ferruginous, and tufts, just as swift as the rest, though of apparently more laboured flight; occasionally a string of shelducks, conspicuous by size and con-

trasted colouring, and among them all, swing along with leisurely wing-beats but equal speed, wedge-like skeins of great grey-geese. A single morning's bag may include seven or eight different species, sometimes a dozen.

Now the rim of the sun shows over the distant sierra, and one begins to see one's environment and to realise what Las Nuevas is like. Of Mother Earth as one normally conceives it not a particle is in sight, beyond such low reeds and miles of samphire-tops as break the watery surface, and a vista of this extends to the horizon.

Behind our positions stretched a *lucio* of open water. Upon this, a mile away, stood an army of flamingoes, whose

croaks and gabblings filled the still air. During a quiescent interval I examined these with binoculars. Thereupon I discovered that the whole *lucio* around them and stretching away, say a league in length, was carpeted with legions of duck, which had not been noticed with the naked eye. The discovery explained also a resonant reverberation that, at recurring intervals, I had noticed all the morning, and which I had attributed to the gallant Cervera's squadron at quick-firing gun-practice away in Cádiz Bay. Now I saw the cause; it was due to the duck-hawks and birds-of-prey! Twice within ten minutes a swooping marsh-harrier aroused that host on wing—or, say, half-a-mile of them—to fly in terror; but only to settle a few hundred yards

farther away. The harrier's hope was clearly to find a wounded bird among the crowd—the massed multitude none dared to tackle.

It is nine o'clock, the pile of dead has mounted up, but the "flight" is slackening. Already I see our mounted keepers (who have hitherto stood grouped on an islet two miles away) separate and ride forth to set the ducks once more in motion. At this precise moment one remembers two things—both that wretched breakfast at 3 A.M., and the luxuries that lie at hand, almost awash among the reeds. Ducks pass by unscathed for a full half-hour, while such quiet reigns in "No. 1" that tawny water-shrews climb confidingly up the reeds of my screen.

Meanwhile the efforts of our drivers were becoming apparent in a renewal of flighting ducks; but we would here emphasise the fact that these second and artificially-produced flights are never so effective from a fowler's point of view as the earlier, natural movements of the game. For the ducks thus disturbed come, as the Spanish keepers put it, *obligados* and not of their own free-will. Hence they all pass high—many far above gunshot—and not even the attraction that our fleet of "decoys" (for we have now stuck up the whole of the morning's spoils to deceive their fellows) will induce more than a limited proportion, and those only the smaller bands, to descend from their aërial altitude.

The "movement" of these masses nevertheless affords another of those spectacular displays that we must at least try to describe. For though none of their sky-high armies will pass within gunshot—or ten gunshots—yet one cannot but be struck with amazement when the whole vault of heaven above presents a quivering vision of wings—shaded, seamed, streaked, and spotted from zenith to horizon. Then the multiplied pulsation of wings is distinctly perceptible—a singular sensation. One remembers it when, perhaps an hour later, you become conscious of its recurrence. But now the heavens are clear! Not a single flight crosses the sky—not one, that is, within sight. But up above, beyond the limits of human vision, there pass unseen hosts, and *their's* is that pulsation you feel.

The passage of these sky-scrapers is actuated by no puny manœuvre of ours. They are travellers on through-routes. Perhaps the last land (or water) they touched was Dutch or

Danish; and they will next alight (within an hour) in Africa. Already at their altitude they can see, spread out, as it were, at their feet, the marshes and meres of Morocco.

Although nominally describing that first day in Las Nuevas (and, so far as facts go, adhering rigidly thereto), yet we are endeavouring to concentrate in fewest words the actual lessons of many subsequent years of practical experience. Thus the pick-up on that day (though it may have numbered a couple of hundred ducks) we refrain from recording in this attempt to convey the concrete while avoiding detail.

Back again, splash, splosh, through mud and mire, two hours' ride to our camp-fire—a picturesque scene with our marsh-bred friends gathered round, their tawny faces lurid in the firelight as flames shoot upwards and pine-cones crack like pistol-shots; and over the embers hang a score of teal each impaled on a supple bough. Away beyond there loom like spectres our horses tethered when silvery moonlight glances through scattered pines. Things would have been pleasant indeed had the rain but stopped occasionally. True we had our tents; but our men slept in the open, each rolled in his cloak, beneath some sheltering bush.

CHAPTER IX

WILDFOWL-SHOOTING IN THE MARISMA

ITS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

VAST as their aggregations may be, yet wildfowl do not necessarily—merely by virtue of numbers—afford any sort of certainty to the modern fowler. Half-a-million may be in view day by day, but in situations or under conditions where scarce half-a-score can be killed. This elementary feature is never appreciated by the uninitiated, nor probably ever will be, since Hawker's terse and trenchant prologue failed to fix it.[1]

What "the Colonel" wrote a century ago stands equally good to-day; and *mutatis mutandis* will probably stand good a century hence.

Long before the breech-loaders—even authors had appeared on the scene with before the epoch of Hawker with his copper-caps and detonators—the Spanish fowlers of the marisma had already devised means of their own whereby the swarming wildfowl could be secured by wholesale. As a market venture, their system of a stalking-horse (called a *cabresto*) was deadly in the extreme and interesting to boot, affording unique opportunity of closely approaching massed wildfowl while still unconscious of danger. We have spent delightful days crouching behind these shaggy ponies, and describe the method later. But this is not a style that at all subserves the aspirations of the modern gunner, and we here study the problem from his point of view.

[1] See *Instructions to Young Sportsmen*, by P. Hawker, second edition (1816), pp. 229, 230.

The essence of success lies in ascertaining precisely the exact areas where fowl in quantity are "strongly haunted," by day and night, together with their regular lines of flight thence and thereto. Obviously such exact knowledge in these vast marismas, devoid of landmarks, demands careful observation, and it must be remembered that these things change with every change of weather and water. Having located such well-frequented resorts or flight-lines, the degree of success will yet depend on the *strength* of the "haunt." It may happen (despite all care) that the partiality of the fowl for that special spot or route is merely superficial and evanescent. A dozen shots and they have cleared out, or altered their course. In the reverse case, so strong may be their "haunt" that no amount of disturbance entirely drives them away, and even those that have already been scared by the sound of shooting will yet return again and again.

By night ducks feed in the slobby shallows and oozes, but concealed by the samphire-growth which flourishes in such places. Hence the use of the stancheon-gun is not here available as in the case of bare, plant-free, tidal flats at home and elsewhere.

In the dusk the ducks have arrived at these feeding-grounds in quite small trips or bunches. But as the stars pale towards the dawn, they depart in larger detachments, often numbering hundreds in a pack. Still, such are their enormous numbers that, even so, their shifting armies form an almost continuous stream in the direction whither they take their course. But where is that? That is the problem on the solution of which the fowler's success depends. We will presume that you have so solved it. In that case, you will have witnessed, between an hour before sun-up and half-an-hour thereafter, as marvellous a procession as the scheme of bird-life can afford.

Let us follow the fowl throughout that matutinal flight. Away through leagues of empty space they hold their course, now high in air where vistas of brown samphire loom like land and might conceal a lurking foe, anon lowering their flight where sporadic sheets or lanes of open water break the tawny monotony. Beyond all this, stretching away in open waters like an inland sea, lies a big *lucio*. That is their goal. One by one, or in dozens and scores, the infinite detachments re-unite to splash

The Stanchion-Gun in the Marisma—dawn.

down upon that glassy surface. Within brief minutes the whole expanse is darkened as with a carpet.

Upon this *lucio* the assembled ducks command a view for miles around. Hardly could a water-rat approach unseen. If the fowl persisted in passing the entire day thereon, no human power would avail to molest them—they could bid defiance to fowlers of every race and breed. Two circumstances, however, favour their human foes. The first is the perpetual disturbance created among those floating hosts by birds-of-prey. These—chiefly marsh-harriers, but including also the great black-backed gulls—execute perpetual "feints" at the swimming ducks, sections of which (often thousands strong) are compelled to rise on wing by the menacing danger. The dominant idea actuating the raptores (since they are unable to attack the main bodies) is to ascertain if one or more wounded ducks remain afloat after their sound companions have cleared—the cripples, of course, affording an easy prey. The disturbed fowl will not fly far, perhaps half-a-mile, unless indeed they happen during that flight to catch sight of an attractive fleet of "decoys" moored in some quiet creek a mile or so away.

The second favouring circumstance arises from a difference in habit between ducks in Spain and their relatives (even con-specific) inhabiting British waters. For whereas the latter, as a rule, will remain quiescent in their selected resting-places the livelong day, in Spain, on the contrary, by about 11 A.M., the force of hunger begins visibly to operate—not in all, but in sections, which, rising in detachments, separate themselves from the masses and commence exploratory cruises among the smaller and shallower *lucios* where food may be found.[1] This intermittent flight slackens off for an hour or so at midday, is renewed in the afternoon, and stops dead one hour before sun-down.

To exploit the advantage offered by these habits it is necessary to ascertain to which of the innumerable minor *lucios* these "hunger-marchers" are resorting. Observation will have decided that point, and our expert gunner now (at 11 A.M.) be concealed with scrupulous care, and his fleet of, say, fifty decoys set out in lifelike and (or) attractive attitudes, exactly in

[1] In the big and deep *lucios* no plant-life exists, nor could surface-feeding ducks reach down to it even if subaquatic herbage of any kind did grow there.

the centre of the particular lagoon, whither, of recent days, the ducks have been observed to resort in greatest abundance from noon onwards.

The gunner lies expectant on the cut rushes which strew the bottom-boards of his *cajon*—a box-shaped punt some 7 feet long by 2½ broad, which is concealed by being thrust bodily in the midst of the biggest samphire bush available. The craft nevertheless is still afloat and, though flat-bottomed, is yet terribly crank, and any sudden movement to port or starboard threatens to capsize the entire outfit.

To allay the tense suspicion of flighting wildfowl, several of the adjacent bushes for fifty yards around have been heightened by the addition of a cut bough or two—the idea being to induce a theory among passing ducks merely that this particular spot seems peculiarly favourable to samphire-growth—that and nothing more.

In setting up decoys, while many are posed in lifelike attitudes, it is advisable to hang a few (especially white-plumaged species, such as pintail, shoveler, and wigeon-drakes) in almost vertical positions, in order to induce a belief among hungry incomers that these birds are "turning-up" to feast on abundant subaquatic plants beneath.

This intermittent flight is naturally irregular, hunger affecting greater or less numbers on different days; but when it comes off in force affords the cream of wildfowling from before noon till the sun droops in the west. During the last hour before he dips not a wing moves.

Duck-shooting thus resolves itself into two main systems: (1) intercepting the fowl on flight at dawn, and later (2) awaiting their incoming at expected points.

A good shoot may sometimes be engineered by cutting a broad "ride" through the samphire along some flight-line, thereby forming an open channel between two *lucios*. Ducks which have hitherto flown sky-high in order to cross the danger-zone will now pass quite low along the new waterway, and even prefer it to crossing the cover at hazard, however high.

A typical day's fowling in mid-marisma may be described. The night has been spent in a reed-built hut charmingly situate on a mud-islet half-an-acre in extent, and commanding unequalled views of flooded and featureless marisma. At 4 A.M. we

turn out and by the dim light of a lantern embark in a *cajon* (punt), serenaded by the croaks and gabbling of flamingoes somewhere out in the dark waters. My wild companion, Batata, kneeling in the bows and grasping a punt-pole in either hand, bends to his work, and away we glide—into the unknown.

A weird feeling it is squatting thus at water-level and watching the wavelets dance by or dash over our two-inch free-board. We make but three miles an hour, yet seem to fly past half-seen water-plants. A myriad stars are reflected on the still surface ahead, and it is by a single great *Lucero* (planet) that our pilot is now steering his course.

Batata presently remarks that we have "arrived." One takes his word for this. Still that verb does conditionally imply some place or spot of arrival. Here there was none—none, at least, that could be differentiated from any other point or spot in many circumambient leagues. But this was not an hour for philological disquisition, so we mentally decide that we have reached "nowhere." A few hours later when daylight discovers our environment, that negation appears sufficiently proved. There are visible certain objects on the distant horizon. One—that behind us—proves to be the roof of the *choza* wherein we had spent the night—"hull-down" to the eastward. The others a lengthened scrutiny with prism-binoculars shows to be a trio of wild camels feeding knee-deep in water. Now where you see such signs you may conclude you are nowhere.

We skip a few hours, since we have no intention of inflicting on the reader the details of a morning's flight-shooting. Suffice that at 9 A.M. B. reappears poling up in his punt, the spoils are collected (forty-nine in all, mostly wigeon and teal, with a few pintail and shoveler and one couple of gadwall), and the plan for the day discussed. To remain where we were (as this *lucio* had yesterday attracted a fairly continuous flight of ducks) had been our original idea. But a shift of the wind had rendered a second *lucio*, distant two miles, a more favourable resort for to-day, and thither accordingly we set out. Here a new *puesto* is promptly prepared and the forty-nine decoys deftly set out, each supported by a supple wand stuck in the mud below. Hardly had these preparations been completed, than the intermittent (or secondary) flight had commenced, file after file of ducks heading up from distant space, wheeling over or dashing

past the seductive decoys. At recurring moments during the next three or four hours (with blank intervals between) I enjoyed to the full this most delightful form of wildfowling, so totally different in practice to all others.

Such is the speed of flighting fowl, such their keenness of vision and instant perception of danger, that but a momentary point of time—say the eighth of a second—is available fully to exploit each chance. Should the gunner rise too quick, the ducks are beyond the most effective range; yet within a space not to be measured by figures or words, they will have detected the fraud, and in a flash have scattered, shooting vertically upwards like a bunch of sky-rockets.

Two features in the life-history of the duck-kind become apparent. The first points to the probability that adults pair for life, and that the mated couples keep together all winter even when forming component units in a crowd. For when an adult female is shot from the midst of a pack, the male will almost invariably accompany her in her fall to the very surface of the water, and will afterwards circle around, piping disconsolately, and even return again and again in search of his lost partner. This applies chiefly to wigeon, but we have frequently observed the same trait in pintail and occasionally in other species. It is only the drakes that display this constancy; a bereaved female continues her flight unheeding.

The feature is most conspicuous when awaiting ducks at their feeding-grounds (*comederos*), but it also occurs when shooting on their flight-lines (*correderos*) between distant points.

The second singular habit is the custom, particularly among wigeon, to form what are termed in Spanish *magañonas*—little groups of four to a dozen birds consisting of a single female with a bevy of males in attendance, flying aimlessly hither and thither in a compact mass, the drakes constantly calling and the one female twisting and turning in all directions as though to avoid their attentions. The *magañonas* appear blind to all sense of danger, and will pass within easy range even though a gunner be fully exposed. Not only this, but a first shot may easily account for half-a-dozen, and should the hen be among the fallen, the survivors will come round again and again in search of her. We have known whole *magañonas* to be secured within a few minutes.

Other species also form *magañonas*, but more rarely and never in so conspicuous a manner as the wigeon. The habit certainly springs from what we have elsewhere termed a "pseudo-erotic" instinct (see *Bird-life of the Borders*, 2nd ed., pp. 208, 234-5), and is probably the first pairing of birds which have just then reached full maturity.

From mid-February to the end of March ducks are constantly departing northwards whenever conditions favour, to wit, a south-west wind in the afternoon, which wind is a feature of the season. Their vacant places are at once filled by an equally constant succession of arrivals from the south (Africa), easily recognised by rusty stains on their lower plumage (denoting ferruginous water) which they lose here within a few days.

Ducks at this season can find food everywhere in the *manzanilla*, or camomile, which now grows up from the bottom and in places covers the shallows with its white, buttercup-like flowers. Having food everywhere there is less necessity to fly in search of it. It is, however, a curious feature of the season that, after the morning-flight (which is shorter than in mid-winter), ducks practically suspend all movement from, say, 8 A.M. till the daily sea-breeze (*Viento de la mar*) springs up about 1 P.M. During these five hours not a wing moves, but no sooner has the sea-breeze set in than constant streams of ducks fly in successive detachments from the large open *lucios* to the shallower feeding-grounds. Thus we have known a late February "bag," which at 2 P.M. had numbered but a miserable half-score, mount up before dusk to little short of a hundred.

Wigeon arrive from the end of September onwards, the great influx occurring during the first fortnight of November. They commence leaving from mid-February, and by the end of March all (save a few belated stragglers) are gone.

The same remarks apply equally to pintail, shoveler, and teal, though, as before remarked, pintail often appear exceptionally early—in September,—and are again extremely conspicuous (after being scarce all winter) on their return journey—*de vuelta paso*, as it is called—in February.

Gadwall, preferring deep waters, are not numerous in the

shallow marisma. A big bag therein, nevertheless, will always include a few couples of this species.

Shoveler are so numerous that we have known over eighty bagged by one gun in a day.

Garganey chiefly occur in early autumn and again *de vuelta paso* in March. They winter in Africa.

Marbled duck breed here, and in September large bags may be made; but in mid-winter (when they have retired to Africa) it is rare to secure more than half-a-dozen or so in a day. They are very bad eating.

Shelduck only occur in dry seasons. They fall easy victims to any sort of "decoy" provided it is *white*. A local fowler told us he had killed many by substituting (in default of natural decoys) the dry bones and skulls of cattle! Ruddy shelduck do not frequent the marisma, preferring the sweeter waters and shallows adjoining Doñana.

Diving-ducks avoid the marisma except only in the wettest winters.

An hour before sun-down, as above stated, all bird-movement ceases. For a brief space absolute tranquillity reigns over the illimitable marisma. The dusky masses that cover the *lucios* seem lulled to sleep and silence. But the interlude is very temporary. Hardly has night thrown her mantle across the wastes, than all that tremendous, eager, vital energy is re-awakened to fresh activities. A striking and a memorable experience will be gained by awaiting that exact hour at some favourite feeding-ground. Within a few minutes, as darkness deepens, the ambient air fairly hisses and surges with the pulsation of thousand strong pinions hurtling close by one's ear, and with the splash of heavy bodies flung down by fifties and hundreds in the shallows almost within arm's-length—the nearest approximation that occurs to us is a bombardment of pompoms. Yet, for all that, night-flighting in the marisma (having regard to the quantities concerned) produces but insignificant results. The ducks come in so low and so direct—no preliminary circling overhead—and at such velocity that this flight-shooting may be likened to an attempt to hit cannon-balls in the dark. Our expert shots score, say, eight or ten, but what is that? The nocturnal disturbance, moreover, may be (and usually

is) prejudicial to the next day's operations, and it is clearly not worth the risk, for half-a-dozen shots in the twilight, to discount a hundred at dawn.

The fewer shots ducks hear, the better. Never disturb them unless you have every reasonable prospect of exacting a proportionate toll.

CHAPTER X

WILD-GEESE IN SPAIN

THEIR SPECIES, HAUNTS, AND HABITS

To Spain, as to other lands that remain unaltered and "unimproved," resort the greylag geese in thousands to pass the winter.

In our marismas of the Guadalquivir they appear during the last days of September, but it is a month later ere their full numbers are made up, and from that date until the end of February their defiant multitudes and the splendid difficulties of their pursuit afford a unique form and degree of wild sport perhaps unknown outside of Spain.

Ride through the marisma in November; it is mostly dry, and autumn rains have merely refreshed the sun-baked alluvia and formed sporadic shallows, or *lucios* as they are here termed. That *lucio* straight ahead is a mile across, yet it is literally tessellated with a sonorous crowd. With binoculars one distinguishes similar scenes beyond; the intervening space—and indeed the whole marisma—is crowded with geese as thickly as it is on our immediate front. To right and left rise fresh armies hitherto concealed among the *armajo*, till the very earth seems in process of upheaval, while the air resounds with a volume of voices—gabblings, croaks, and shrill bi-tones mingled with the rumble of beating wings.

Amid the islands of the Norwegian Skaargaard one can see geese in bulk, but there their numbers are distributed over a thousand miles of coast. Here we have them all—or a large proportion—concentrated in what is by comparison but a narrow space.

In their life-habits these geese are strictly diurnal, that is, they feed by day—chiefly in the early morning and again towards afternoon, with a mid-day interval of rest. The night they spend

asleep on some broad *lucio* or other bare open space. That habit, however, is subject to modification during the periods of full moon, when many geese avail themselves of her brilliant light to feed in even greater security than they can enjoy by day. Their food consists exclusively of vegetable substances—at first of the remnants of the summer's herbage, such as green ribbon-grass (*canaliza*), and other semi-aquatic plants; their main sustenance in mid-winter consists of the tuber-bearing roots of spear-grass (*Cyperus longus* and *C. rotundus*) which they dig up from the ground.

ROOT OF SPEAR-GRASS

When autumn rains are long delayed, their voracious armies will already have consumed every green thing that remains in the parched marismas long before the "new water" from the heavens shall have furnished new feeding-grounds. In such cases the geese are forced to depart, and do so—so far as our observation goes—in the direction of Morocco; returning thence (within a few hours) immediately after rain has fallen. Their entry, on this second arrival, is invariably from the south and south-west—that is, from the sea.

There are three methods of shooting wild-geese in the Spanish marismas which may here be specified, to wit:—

(1) Morning-flight, when the geese habitually come to "take sand" at the dawn. See next chapter.

(2) "Driving" during the day (available only in dry years).

(3) Awaiting their arrival at dusk at their *dormideros*, or sleeping-places, see pp. 97, 98.

An all-important factor in their pursuit arises from an economic necessity with wild-geese constantly to possess, and frequently to renew, a store of sand or grit in their gizzards. To obtain this they resort every morning to certain sandy spots in the marismas (hereinafter described, and which are known as *vetas*); or failing that, when the said *vetas* are submerged, to the sand-dunes outside. Although great numbers of geese resort

each morning to these spots, yet those numbers are but a small proportion of their entire aggregate, for no individual goose needs to replenish his supply of sand or grit more often than perhaps once a week, or even less frequently. Hence at each dawn it is a fresh contingent of geese that comes in *para arenárse* = to "sand themselves," as our keepers put it.

One other quality in the natural economy of wild-geese requires mention—that is, their sense of scent. This defence wild-geese possess in equal degree with wild-ducks and most other wild creatures; but each class differ in their modes of utilising it.

For whereas ducks on detecting human scent will take instant alarm and depart afar on that indication alone; yet geese, on the other hand, though their nostrils have fully advised them of the presence of danger, will not at once take wing, but remain—with necks erect and all eyes concentrated towards the suspect point—awaiting confirmation by sight what they already know by scent.

That such is the case we ascertained in the days (now long past) when we ventured to stalk geese with no more covert than the low fringe of rush that borders the marisma. "*Gatiando*" = cat-crouching, our keepers term the method—laborious work, creeping flat for, it may be, 200 yards, through sloppy mud with less than two-foot of cover. Should it become necessary during the stalk to go directly to windward of the fowl, one's presence (though quite unseen) would be instantly detected. The geese, ceasing to feed or rest, all stood to attention, while low, rumbling alarm-signals resounded along their lines. But they did not take wing. Presently, however, one reached a gap in the thickly growing rushes—it might not extend to a yard in width, yet no sooner was but a glimpse available to the keen eyes beyond, than the whole pack rose in simultaneous clatter of throats and wings. They had merely waited that scintilla of ocular confirmation of a known danger.

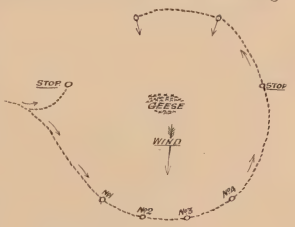
"Driving" (in a Dry Season)

For four months no rain had fallen. The parched earth gaped with cavernous cracks; vegetation was dried up; starving cattle stood about listless, and every day one saw the assembled vultures devouring the carcases of those already dead.

From the turrets of our shooting-lodge one's eye surveyed—no longer an inland sea, but a monotone of sun-baked mud; inspection through binoculars revealed the fact that this whole space was dotted with troops of . . . well, a friend who was with us thought they were sheep; but which, in fact, were bands of greylag geese.

The fluctuations of Spanish seasons—varying from Noachian deluge to Saharan drought—necessarily react upon the habits of wildfowl. These changes are one of the charms of the country; at any rate, they "stretch out" the fowler to devise some new thing.

Those battalions of greylags posted out there on a vantage-ground where a mouse might be a prominent object at 100 yards, how can they be reduced to possession? Our friend aforesaid replies that the undertaking appears humanly impossible. We have, nevertheless, elaborated a system of driving, by which in dry years the greylag geese may be obtained with some degree of certainty.



This morning (the last of January) we rode forth, four guns and four keepers, across that plain. Upon approaching the pack of geese selected, one keeper rides to a position rather above the "half-wind" line, and there halts as a "stop." The remaining seven ride on till, at a silent signal, No. 1 gun, without checking his horse, passes the bridle forward and rolls out of the saddle with gun and gear, lying at once flat as a flounder on the bare dry mud. At intervals of eighty yards each successive gun does the same, the four being now extended in a half-moon that commands nearly a quarter-mile of space. The three keepers (leading the other horses) continue riding forward in circular course till a second "stop" is placed in the right flank corresponding with the one already posted on the left. The last pair now complete the circuit by riding round to windward of the game, separating by 200 yards as that position is attained. (See diagram.)

How are these four guns to conceal themselves on perfectly

bare ground from the telescopic sight of wild-geese! Occasionally, some small natural advantage may be found such as tufts of rushes—and these are at once availed of. But this morning there is no such aid. Not a rush nor a mole-hill breaks that dead-level monotone for miles; and in such condition a human being, however flat he may lie, is bound to be detected by the keen-eyed geese long ere they arrive within shot.[1] A dozen twigs of tree-heath, dipped in wet mud and then allowed to dry, so as to harmonise in colour with the surroundings, may be utilised; but the annexed sketch shows better than words a portable screen we have devised and which fulfils this purpose. It consists of four bamboo sticks two feet long, sharpened at the point, and connected by four or five strings with one-foot intervals. This when rolled up forms a bundle no thicker than an umbrella.

SHELTERS FOR DRIVING WILD-GEESE

On reaching one's post the bundle unrolls of itself, the sharpened points are stuck into the ground at an angle sloping towards the prostrate gun, a few tufts of dead grass (carried in one's pocket) are woven through the strings and the shelter is complete. Needless to say, these preparations must be carried out with the minimum of movement in face of such vigilant foes. Some assistance, however, accrues from the geese continuing to watch the moving file of horsemen while the prostrate gunner erects his screen.

Well, the circle being complete, all four drivers (distant now, say, 1000 yards) converge on the common centre. The watchful geese have ceased grubbing up the spear-grass, and now stand

[1] We have here in our mind's eye our own shooting-grounds in the Bætican marismas. But there are other regions in Andalucia where geese feed on open grassy plains on which shelter of some sort is often available. It may be but a clump of dead thistles or wild asparagus; but at happy times a friendly ditch or dry watercourse will yield quite a decent hollow where one can hide in comparative comfort and security. On the day here described no such "advantage" befriended.

alert with a forest of necks erect, while an increasing volume of gabbling attests their growing suspicion. Presently, with redoubled outcry, they rise on wing, and now commences the real science of our Spanish fowlers. The guns, after all, command but a small segment of the circle—anywhere else the geese can break out scathless—and this mischance it is the object of our drivers and flankers to avert. No sooner does the gaggling band shift its course to port or starboard than the "stop" on that side is seen to be urging his horse in full career to intercept their flight, yet using such judgment as will neither deflect their course too much or turn them back altogether. Sometimes both flankers and drivers are seen to be engaged at once, and a pretty sight it is to the prostrate gunners to watch the equestrian manœuvres.

Presently the whole band head away for what appears the only available outlet, and should they then pass directly over one or other of the guns, are seldom so high but that a pair should be secured right-and-left.

In strong gales of wind the geese, on being driven, are apt, instead of taking a direct course, to circle around in revolving flight, gaining altitude at each revolution; and in such case not only come in very high but at incredible speed—*mas lejeros que zarcetas*—swifter than teal, as Vasquez puts it.

The first essential of success in driving wild-geese (and the same applies to great bustard and all large winged game) is to instal the firing-line as near as may be without disturbing the fowl. The more remote the guns the greater the difficulty in forcing the game through the crucial pass.

To manœuvre single bands of geese as above, three or four guns at most, with the same number of drivers, are best. A great crowd of horsemen (such being never seen in these wilds) unduly arouses suspicions already acute enough. With any greater number of guns, it is advisable to extend the field of operations to, say, two or three miles, thereby enclosing several troops of geese—this requiring a large force of drivers. It does not, however, follow that each of these enclosed troops will "enter" to the guns; for should one pack come in advance, the firing will turn back the others. This mischance—or rather bungle—may be averted (or may not) by the leading driver firing a blank shot behind so soon as the first geese are seen to have taken wing. Needless to remark, once a shot has been fired

ahead, it becomes tenfold harder to force the remaining geese to the guns.

Each gun should hold his fire till the main bodies of geese are well on wing and seen to be heading in towards the shooting-line. The "best possible" chances are thus secured, and not for one gun only, but quite possibly for all, as several hundred geese pass down the line. A premature shot, on the contrary, will ruin the best-planned drive, and bring down merited abuse from the rest of the party with scathing contempt from the drivers.

Taking single troops at a time, as many as six or eight separate drives may be worked into a long day. Our first drive to-day produced three geese, the second was blank, while five greylags rewarded the third attempt. In the last instance three of the guns received welcome aid from a string of *ojos*, or land-springs, around which grew a fringe of green rushes, affording excellent cover.

By four o'clock we had secured, in five drives, eleven geese and a wigeon. We then, on information received, changing our plan, rode off to a point which the keeper of that district had noted was being used by the geese as a *dormidero*, or sleeping-place; and here, as dusk fell, an hour's "flighting" added six more greylags to that day's total.

The above may be put down as a fair average day's results in a dry season. From a dozen to a score of driven geese (and occasionally many more) represent, with such game as greylags, a degree and a quality of sport that is ill-represented by cold numerals.

There are spots in the marisma where the configuration of the shore-line enables the flight of the geese, when disturbed, to be foretold with certainty. For geese will not cross dry land: their retreat is always to the open waters. In such situations excellent results accrue from placing the gun-line at a *right angle* to the expected line of flight, while all the "beaters," save one or two to flush the fowl, are stationed as "stops" between the geese and their objective. On rising, the birds thus find themselves confronted by a long line of horsemen who intercept their natural retreat, and, in effect, force them back towards the land. Should the operation be well executed, the landmost gun will probably be the first to fire; while the geese

thereafter pass down the entire line of guns, possibly affording shots to each in turn.

Two guns can then be effectively brought into action. Needless to add, the second must be handled with the utmost rapidity.

In wet winters, when the marisma is submerged, "driving" is not available. Obviously you cannot place a line of guns, however keen, in six inches of water, much less in half-a-yard.

My first impression of wild-goose driving (writes J.) was one of wonder that such intensely astute and wide-awake fowl would ever fly near, much less over so obvious a danger as the little loose semicircle of rosemary twigs behind which I lay prone on the barest of bare mud. Peering through between their naked stalks, I could plainly see the geese some half-mile away, and it seemed incredible that I should not be equally visible to them. Possibly the brown leaves on top of the twigs may have concealed me from the loftier anserine point of view, and the equestrian manœuvres beyond no doubt greatly aided the object. Anyway, the whole pack—three or four hundred, and proportionally noisy—*did* come right over me, and a wildly exciting moment it was, I can assure you! We had six or seven drives that day, and bagged twenty-eight splendid great grey geese, of which eight fell to my lot.

I may perhaps be allowed to add (since such details are taken for granted, or regarded as unworthy of note by regular gunners of the *marisma*) that to-day we had no less than six times to cross and recross a broad marsh-channel called the *Madre*—floundering, splashing, slithering, and stumbling through 100 yards of mud and water full three-foot deep. It may be nothing (if you're used to it), yet twice I've seen horses go down, and their riders take a cold bath, lucky if they didn't broach their barrels! To follow Vasquez about the *marisma* is a job that requires special qualities that not all of us possess or (perchance fortunately ?) require to possess.

The following instructions may be worth the attention of new beginners :—

(1) Never fire till you are fairly certain to kill at least one.

(2) Never rise or even move in your "hide" till the beat is entirely finished.

(3) Reload at once; when big lots are being moved, two, three, or more chances may offer quite unexpectedly.

(4) Wear suitably coloured clothes and head-gear, and never let the sun glint on the gun-barrels.

(5) After firing, watch the departing geese till nearly out of

sight. Though apparently unhurt, one of their company may turn over, stone-dead, in the distance.

"Flighting"—an Incident of a Dry Season

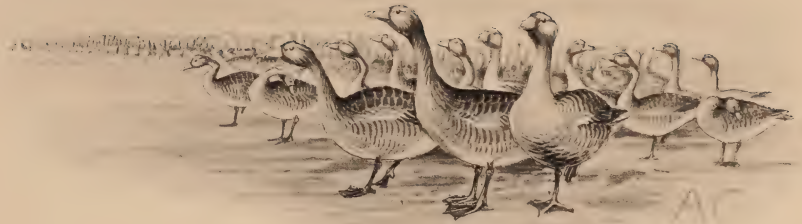
The day above described was selected, not only because it affords a typical illustration of our theme, but also because there had occurred during its course an extraneous incident which serves to amplify this exposition of the pursuit of the greylag goose.

Riding across the marisma, certain signs at once filled both our minds with fresh ideas. All around the ground was littered with cast feathers and other evidence proclaiming that this special spot was a regular resort of geese. We were crossing one of those slightly raised ridges of sand and grit which here and there intersect the otherwise universal dead-level of alluvial mud, and which ridges are known locally as *vetas*—tongues.

Now the nutritive economy of wild-geese, as already explained, requires a frequently replenished store of sand or grit. In wet seasons (the marisma being then submerged) the geese resort to the adjoining sand-dunes of Doñana to secure these supplies. But in dry winters they are enabled to obtain the necessary sand from these *vetas*; and it was to this particular spot that, to the number of many hundreds, the geese were evidently resorting at this period.

At once the measure of opportunity was gauged, and the arrangements necessary for its exploitation were made. Within three minutes a messenger was galloping homewards to summon a couple of men with spades and buckets to prepare a hole wherein one of us might lie concealed at daybreak. A pannier-mule to carry away the excavated material was also requisitioned, since the least visible change in the earth's surface would instantly be recognised by the geese as a danger-signal. Within a few minutes we had resumed our course, to continue the day's sport.

Next morning half an hour before dawn the writer reached the spot. It was pitch-dark and a dense fog prevailed. By what mental process my guides directed an unerring course to that lonely hole in the midst of a pathless and practically boundless waste passes understanding. Such piloting (without aid of compass or even of the heavenly bodies—the usual index on



Wild-Geese in the Marisma.

which marshmen rely) seems to indicate a point where intellect and instinct touch; or perhaps rather a survival of the latter quality which, in modern races, has become obsolete through disuse. Among savage races that faculty of instinct is markedly prominent, indeed the master-force; but there it has been acquired (or retained) at the cost of intellect, which is not the case with our Spanish friends—they possess both qualities. But place the best intellects of Madrid, or Paris, or London in such conditions —in darkness, or fog, or in viewless forest—and not one could hold a straight course for half-a-mile. Within ten minutes each man would be lost, devoid of all sense of direction. That is part of the price of the higher civilisation—the loss of a faculty which need not clash with any other. Of course where people live with a telephone at their ear, with electric trams and "tubes" close at hand, where a whistle will summon an attendant hansom and two a taxi-meter—or, as *Punch* suggested, three may bring down an airship—well, in such case, those modern "advantages" may be held to outweigh the loss of a primitive natural faculty.

Hardly had a tardy light begun to strengthen to the dawn than the soft, soliloquising "Gagga, gagga, gagga," with alternatively the raucous "Honk-honk," resounded afar through the gloom. From seven o'clock onwards geese were flying close around—so near that the rustling of strong wings sounded almost within arm's-length; but that opaque fog held unbroken and nothing could be seen. Long before eight I resolved to quit and leave the fowl undisturbed for another morning rather than open fire at so late an hour. Having a compass, I steered a good line to the point where the horses awaited me, a mile away.

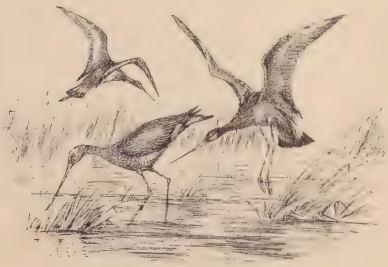
The following morning again broke foggy, though not quite so thick; still I had only five geese at eight o'clock, when three packs coming well in, in rapid succession, afforded three gratifying doubles. Total, eleven geese.

Leaving the geese a few mornings' peace, on February 5 the authors together occupied that hole at dawn. It proved a brilliant morning with a fine show of geese. As each pack came in, we took it in turns to give the word whether to fire or not. In the negative case, our eyes sank gently below the surface of the earth, and crouching down we heard the rush of wind-splitting pinions pass over and behind—probably to offer

a fairer mark when they next wheeled round. Then two, and often three, great geese came hurtling downwards, to fall with resounding thuds behind. Few mistakes occurred this morning and scarce a chance was missed. But never could we succeed in working-in the two doubles at once! The cramped space forbade that. The hole, having been dug for one, gave no freedom of action for two guns; its floor, moreover, had now become a compound of sticky glutinous clay a foot deep, and that further hampered movements. Only one gun could work the second barrel.

After each shot, one of us jumped out and propped up the fallen geese as decoys. To leave them lying about all-ends-up has a disastrous effect.

Ere the "flight" ceased we had five-and-twenty greylags down around our hide, besides several others that had fallen at some distance, duly marked by the keepers who now galloped off to gather these—say two mule-loads of geese. The discovery of that lonely "sanding-place" had had a concrete reward.



CHAPTER XI

WILD-GEESE ON THE SAND-HILLS

Flanking the marisma and separating it from the dry lands of Doñana, there rises rampart-like a swelling range of dunes—the biggest thing in the sand line we have seen on earth. For miles extend these mountains of sand, unbroken by vestige of vegetation or any object to relieve one's eyesight, dazzled—aye, blinded—by that brilliantly scintillating surface, set off in vivid contrast by the azure vault above.

Should a stranger, on first seeing those buttressed dunes, be seriously informed that their naked summits constitute a favourite resort of wild-geese, he might reasonably suspect his informant's sanity, or at least wonder whether his own credulity were not being tested. Yet such is the fact—one of the surprises that befall in Spain, the *pays de l'imprévu*.

The paradox is explained by the stated necessity in wild-geese to furnish their gizzards with store of grit or sand for digestive purposes.

This supply, so long as the marisma is dry, they are able to obtain from those raised ridges of calcareous debris (already described, and known locally as *vetas*) which here and there outcrop from the alluvial wastes. But when winter rains and floods have submerged the whole region and thus deprived the fowl of that local resource, they are forced to rely upon the sand-dunes aforesaid and to substitute pure sea-sand for their former specific of calcareous grit or disintegrated shells. To the sand-dunes, therefore, in the cold bright mornings between October and February, the skeins of greylag geese may be seen directing their course in successive files, in order, as the Spanish put it, "to sand themselves" (*arenárse*).

A notable fact (and one favourable to the fowler) is that, though these dunes extend for miles, yet the geese select

certain limited areas—or, to be precise, the summits of two particular hills—for alighting, and this despite their being regularly shot thereat, year after year.

With the first sign of dawn the earlier arrivals will be heard approaching; but the bulk of the geese come in about sun-up and onwards till 9 A.M. Geese arriving high (having come presumably from a distance) will sometimes, after a preliminary wheel, suddenly collapse in mid-air, diving and shooting earthwards in a score of curving lines—as teal do, or tumbler-pigeons; but with these heavy fowl the manœuvre is executed with surprising grace and command of wing. Their numbers vary on different mornings without any apparent cause; but it may be laid down as a general rule that more will come on clear bright mornings than when the dawn is overcast, while rain proves (as in all wildfowling) an upsetting factor. Sometimes, even on favourable mornings, no geese appear. Occasionally, in small numbers, they may visit the sand in afternoon.

To exploit the advantage afforded by this habit of the geese, it is necessary that the fowler be concealed before dawn in a hole dug for the purpose in the sand—care being taken to utilise any natural concealment, such as a depression flanked by a steep sand-revetment; so that, at least from one quarter, the geese may perceive no danger till right over the gun. The hole (or holes, but *one* is best) must be dug at least twelve hours before, or the newly turned sand will show up dark. Were it not for the risk of wind filling them up with driving sand (a matter of an hour or two), the holes might well be prepared two or even three days beforehand. The excavated material is piled up around the periphery and flattened down smooth, thus forming a raised rampart which screens the suspicious darkness of the interior. Needless to say, the fewer human footprints around the spot, the better.

Such is the inability exhibited by many sportsmen (not being wildfowlers) to conceal their persons—or even to recognise the virtue of concealment—that, for such, the holes are apt to be made too big, and the geese swerve off at sight of those gaping pits. This indeed is a form of sport that none save wildfowlers need essay—others merely succeed in thwarting the whole enterprise.

However carefully prepared and skilfully occupied, these holes

(dug in naked sand) must obviously be visible enough to the keen sight of incoming greylags. One such hole (when backed up by well-placed decoys) the geese may almost ignore; two they distrust; while three inspire something approaching panic. Consequently a single craftsman who knows his business and bides his time will shoot, under the most favourable circumstances, at almost every successive band of geese that means alighting. Two guns, in *full sympathy* with each other, may effectually combine by occupying holes dug at some fifty yards apart and with a single set of decoys set midway between for mutual use. Thus there can be secured fair, frequent, and almost simultaneous shots.

It is essential to bear in mind the fact that the geese have come with the intention (unless prematurely alarmed) of *alighting*. Hence, as they often circle two or three times around before finally deciding, a judicious refusal of all uncertain chances has a concrete reward when, a few seconds later, the pack sweep overhead at half gunshot. The first element of success lies in concealment; the second in ever allowing the geese to come in to such close quarters as renders the shot a certainty.

Greylag geese are, of course, huge birds, very strong, and impenetrable as ironclads. But to tyros (and many others) in the early light they are apt to appear much larger, and consequently much nearer, than is actually the case. All this has, the night before, been impressed upon our friend, the tyro, in solemn, even tragic tones. The urgency of the thing seems to have been graven deep on the very tissues of his brain, and he promises with earnest humility to bear the lesson in mind when the vital moment shall arrive; to deny himself all but point-blank shots well within thirty yards, whereby he will not only himself assist to swell the score, but enable his companion to do likewise.

Words fail to describe that companion's frame of mind at the dawn, when, despite over-night exhortations and assurances, he sees to his horror pack after pack of incoming geese (some of which he has himself let pass within forty yards) "blazed at" at mad and reckless ranges by that wretched scarecrow who never ruffles a feather and afterwards tries to excuse his failure by enlarging on "the extreme height the geese came in at!"

These goose-hills, it may here appropriately be stated, lie

midway between our two shooting-lodges and distant between two and three hours' ride from either. Thus every morning's goose-shooting presupposes some fairly arduous work. It means being in the saddle by 4 A.M. with its resultant discomforts and a long scrambling ride in the dark. Hence the disgust is proportionate when all that work is thrown away in such insane style. Never again for any tyro on earth, though he be our dearest friend, never will the authors turn out at 3 A.M., abusing with clattering hoof the silence and repose of midnight watch and the hours designed for rest—never again, unless alone or with a known and reliable companion.

A word now as to the "decoys." These, in design, are American—first observed and brought across from Chicago—cut out of block-tin, formed and painted to resemble a grey-goose. Geese being gregarious by nature are peculiarly susceptible to the attractions of decoys. Hence these tin geese have a marvellous effect when silhouetted on the skyline of a sand-ridge, being conspicuous for enormous distances and the only "living" objects on miles of desert. They are *most* deadly before sunrise, after which they are apt to glint too much despite a coating of dried mud. As daylight broadens, incoming geese are apt to be disconcerted at losing sight of their supposed friends, which event must occur as each decoy falls end-on—one can interpret the hurried queries and expletives of the puzzled phalanx at that mysterious disappearance! For these reasons it is desirable as soon as possible to supplement the decoys with, and finally to substitute for them, the real article, that is, the newly shot geese, set up in life-like attitudes by aid of twigs brought for the purpose. Fallen birds must, in any case, be set up as fast as gathered; if left spread-eagled as they fell, inevitably the next comers are scared. The more numerous and life-like the decoys, the more certain are the geese to come in with confidence and security.

Naturally great care must be used in getting into and out of one's hide to avoid breaking down its loose and crumbling substance. But it is of first importance quickly to gather and prop up the dead. A winged goose walking away should be stopped with a charge of No. 6 in the head.

As illustrating the life-like effect produced by our tin decoys, on one occasion a friend, after firing both barrels, was watching

a wounded goose, when a strange sound behind attracted his attention. On looking round, a fox was seen to have sprung upon one of the tin geese! That a fox, with his keen intuition and knowledge of things, should have considered it worth his while to stalk wild-geese (even of flesh and blood) on that naked expanse seems incredible. The fact remains that he did it!

Strange indeed are the sensations evoked by that silent watch before day-dawn, in expectation of what truly appears incredible! Buried virtually in a desert of sand the fowler has nothing in sight beyond the dark dunes and a star-spangled sky overhead.

WILD-GEESE ALIGHTING ON THE SAND-HILLS

For his hide is cunningly hidden in a slight depression with a hanging buttress on two sides.

Several hundred yards away, concealed under stunted pines, stand our horses, while the men cower round a small fire, for we have had a biting cold two-hours' ride, and freezing to boot. Half-a-mile away on the other side—the east—begins the marisma, though hidden from view by the waves of rolling sand that intervene.

Now a faint glint of light gleams on the tin decoys and foretells the coming dawn. Five more minutes elapse, and then . . . that low deep-toned anserine call-note, instinct with

concentrated caution—"Gagga, gagga, gagga, gagga"—sets pulses and nerves on fuller stretch. This pack proves to be but an advance-guard; for this is one of those thrice-blessed mornings for which we pray! The geese come in thick and fast in successive bands of six or eight to a score, and all beautifully timed, with exactly the correct interval between. The fowler is a craftsman, a master of his art, and, moreover, he is all alone. Hence he can to-day await the psychological moment with patience and absolute confidence. Rarely in such circumstances is trigger touched in vain; not seldom has the second gun been brought into action with good, thrice with double effect. No simple achievement is this, when fowl vanish swift and ghost-like into space; for, remember, guns must be exchanged with due deliberateness else shifting sand in an instant fills the breech and clogs the actions. Thrice has the double *cerambola* been brought off, and now comes the prettiest shot of all—five geese swing past, head up for the decoys, and pass full broadside at deadliest range; they are barely twenty yards away. In all but simultaneous pairs fall four of their company on the sand—all four stone dead; and but a single survivor wings away to bear news of the catastrophe to his fellows in the marisma!

It is 8 A.M., and the tin decoys are now entirely replaced by geese of flesh and feather, with the fatal result that each successive pack now enters with fullest confidence, so that by doubles and trebles the score mounts fast during the fleeting minutes that yet remain.

Before nine o'clock the flight has ceased. It only remains to gather those birds which have fallen afar—and which have been marked by the keepers from their points of vantage—and to follow by their spoor on the sand such winged geese as may have departed on foot. Some of these will be overtaken, those that have concealed themselves in the nearest rush-beds; but should any have passed on and gained the stronghold of the marisma, they are lost.

Such is an ideal morning's work, one of those rare rewards of patience and skill that occur from time to time. Far differently may the event fall out. There are mornings when scarce once will that weird forewarning note, "Gagga, gagga," rejoice the expectant ear with harsh music, when no chain-like skeins dot and serry the eastern skies, or ever a greylag appears

to remember his wonted haunts. We do not complain, much less despair. Such are the underlying, fundamental conditions of wildfowling in all lands. To a nature-lover the wildness of the scene, with its unique conditions and environment are ever sufficient reward.

Roughly speaking, from a dozen to a score of geese may be reckoned as a fair average morning's work for one gun. The following figures, selected from our game-books, indicate the degree of success that rewards exceptional skill. In each instance they apply to but one fowler, though two guns (12-bores) may have been employed.

		Remarks.
1903.		
Dec. 4.	29 geese.	Later in day, shot 46 ducks in the *marisma* close by.
Dec. 5.	51 geese.	Later, shot 25 ducks, 16 snipe.—B. F. B.
1904.		
Nov. 27.	27 geese.	(A second gunner shot but three.)
Nov. 30.	52 geese.	
1903.		
Jan. 9.	23 geese.	Westerly gale kept filling hole with sand; half my time spent in new excavation.—W. J. B.
1908.		
Dec. 7.		Three guns on sand-hills, 4 + 7 + 22 = 33 geese.
Dec. 10.	42 geese.	Shots fired, 44. Later in day, shot 55 ducks, 3 snipe = 100 head.—B. F. B.
1909.		
Jan. 8.	38 geese.	
Jan. 19.	59 geese.	The record.—(B. F. B.)
Dec. 29.		H.M. King Alfonso XIII., 6 geese; Marq. de Viana, 5 = 11 geese (an unfavourable morning).
1910.		
Jan. 7.		Two guns (second at Caño de la Casquera), 12 + 28 = 40 geese.
Jan. 8.	23 geese.	

Possibly the larger totals are unsurpassed in the world's records. By way of contrast we append what may perchance be discovered in the note-book of the veracious tyro :—

Went out three mornings at three, emptied three cartridge-bags at ridiculous ranges, fluked three geese, and scared three thousand.

Instructions in shooting Wild-Geese

Where the main object is *close quarters*, ordinary 12-bore guns suffice. But since geese are very strong and heavily clad, large shot is a necessity, say No. 1.

Thirty to thirty-five yards should be regarded as the outside range, with forty yards as an extreme limit. The latter, however,

should only be attempted in exceptional cases, and never when shooting in company.

Should two guns be employed, the case of the second is, of course, different. It may be loaded with larger shot—say AAA—which is effective up to fifty yards.

The speed of geese (like that of bustards) is extremely deceptive—as much so as their apparent nearness when really far out of shot. When in full flight geese travel as fast as ducks or as driven grouse, though their relatively slow wing-beats give a totally false impression thereof. It is a safe rule for beginners to allow *double* that forward swing of the gun that may appear needful to inexpert eyes.

Even when geese are slowing down to alight, the impetus of their flight is still far greater than it appears.

It is a mistake to suppose (as many urge) that geese cannot be killed coming in, that the shot then "glances off their steely plumage," or that you "must let them pass over and shoot from behind," etc., etc. The cause of all these frequent misapprehensions is—the old, old story—*too far back!* Hold another foot ahead—or a yard, according to circumstance—and this dictum will be handsomely proved.

Never deliberately try to kill two at one shot; it results in killing neither. But by shooting well ahead of *one* goose that is seen to be aligned with another beyond, *both* may thus be secured.

CHAPTER XII

SOME RECORDS IN SPANISH WILDFÓWLING

El Travierso, *February* 9, 1901.—An hour before dawn we (five guns) lay echeloned obliquely across a mile of water, the writer's position being the second out. No. 1 squatted (in six inches of water) between me and the shore; but, being dissatisfied, moved elsewhere shortly after daybreak, leaving with me two geese and about a dozen ducks. These, with thirty-six of my own, I set out as decoys. Shortly thereafter I heard the gaggle of geese, and two, coming from behind, were already so near that there was only time to change *one* cartridge to big shot. The geese passed abeam, quite low and within thirty yards, but six feet apart—impossible to get them both. Held on; upon seeing that the decoys were a fraud, the geese spun up vertically, and that *one* cartridge secured both. The incident gives opportunity to introduce two rough sketches pencilled down at the moment. During this day there were recurrent periods when for ten or fifteen minutes ducks flew extremely fast and well—*revoluciones*, our keepers term these sporadic intermittent

movements; then for a full hour or more might follow a spell of absolute silence and an empty sky. Almost the whole of these successive flights concentrated on No. 2—such is fowler's luck,—so that by dusk I had gathered 105 ducks, 3 geese, 3 flamingoes, and 4 godwits; total, 115. The next gun (J. C. C.), though only 200 yards away, in No. 3, had but 30 ducks; while the others had practically had no shooting all day. Bertie, however, two miles away at the Desierto, added 65 —bringing the day's total to 268 ducks, 8 geese, etc. Three guns left to-night.

GODWITS

Next day at the Cañaliza, Bertie and I had 70 ducks by noon, when (by reason of intense sun-glare at the point) I shifted back to my yesterday's post—two hours' tramp through sticky mud and water, with a load of cartridges, ducks, etc. Thereat in one hour (4 to 5 P.M.) I secured 56 ducks, bringing my total for the two days—a record in my humble way, but surpassed threefold, as will be seen on following pages —to over 200 head, and for the party, to precisely 500 (491 ducks and 9 geese), besides flamingoes, ruffs, grey-plover, etc.

A curious incident occurred on February 11 (1907). But few ducks—and they all teal—had "flighted" early, and a strong west wind having "blown" the water, my post was left near dry. Just as I prepared to move 300 yards eastward, a marvellous movement of teal commenced. On the far horizon appeared three whirling clouds, each perhaps 100 yards in length by 20 in depth, and all three waltzing and wheeling in marshalled manœuvres down channel towards me. To right and left in rhythmical revolutions swept those masses, doubling again and again upon themselves with a precision of movement that passes understanding. Each unit of those thousands, actuated by simultaneous impulse, changed course while moving at lightning speed; and with that changed course they changed also their colour, flashing in an instant from dark to silvery white, while the roar of wings resembled an earthquake.

All three clouds had already passed along the deeper water

beyond my reach when there occurred this strange thing. A peregrine falcon had for some time been hanging around studying with envious eye the dozen or two dead ducks stuck up around my post; now he swept away, as it were, to intercept that feathered avalanche on my right, with the result that the third and last cloud, being cut off, doubled back in tumultuous confusion right in my face—what a spectacle! The puny twelve-bore brought down a perfect shower of teal—probably 30 or more fell all around me. I gathered 18 as fast as the sticky mud allowed; others fluttered here and there beyond reach; how many in all escaped to feed marsh-harriers none can tell.

Another incident with peregrine:—I had just taken post for night-flighting at the Albacias, when, as dusk fell, a big bird appeared in the gloom making, with laboured flight, directly towards me. Thinking (though doubtfully) that it was a goose, I fired. The stranger proved to be a beautiful adult peregrine, carrying in its claws a marbled duck, and the pair are now set up in my collection.

Figures such as the following are apt to provoke two sentiments: (1) that they are not true, or that (2), being true, such results must be easy of attainment. The first we pass over. As regards the second, the assumption ignores the nature and essential character of wildfowl.

These, being cosmopolitans, remain precisely the same wherever on the earth's surface they happen to be found. It is their sky they change, not their natural disposition or their fixed habits, when wildfowl shift their homes. The difficulty is that not half-a-dozen men in a thousand understand wildfowl or the supreme difficulty which their pursuit entails, whether in Spain, England, or elsewhere.

In England, it is true, such results are out of the question, simply because the country is highly drained, cultivated, and populous. Were it desired to recover for England those immigrant hosts—the operation would not be impossible—break down the Bedford Level and flood five counties! Then you might enjoy in the Midlands such scenes as to-day we see in Spain.

As a matter of simple fact—and this we state without suspicion of egotism, or careless should such uncharitably be imputed—the results recorded below represent even for Spain

something that approaches the human maximum alike in wild-fowling skill, in endurance, and in deadly earnest.

That test of individual skill has, it may go without saying, been demonstrated during all these years times without number. There are not, within the authors' knowledge, a score of men who have fairly gathered to their gun in one day 100 ducks in the open marisma. Again, while one such gun, who is thoroughly efficient, will secure his century, others (including excellent game-shots) will fail to bag one-tenth of that number. There can be no question here of "luck" in that long run of years.

A feature, more valuable than the figures themselves, is the light they throw upon the varying distribution of the *Anatidae* (both specifically and seasonably) in the south of Spain.

1897. *November* 10.—One Gun (W. J. B.)

Dawn at El Puntal	6 geese
Forenoon at Santolalla	128 ducks
Afternoon „ „	2 stags

1897. *November* 25.—Las Nuevas (C. D. W. and B. F. B.)

307 ducks, 53 geese

(Geese, all the afternoon, came well in to decoys)

1898. *January* 29, 30, and 31.—Two Guns (W. D. M. and W. J. B.)

437 ducks, 17 geese

1903. *January* 18.—Flight-Shooting with 12-bore at Caño Dulce (one Gun)

139 Wigeon
32 Pintail
20 Teal
22 Shovelers
10 Gadwall
1 Mallard
3 Greylag Geese

Total, 224 ducks and 3 geese. About one-half shot on natural flight before 11 A.M.; the rest later, over "decoys." Nice breeze all day.

1903. *February*.—Three Consecutive Days' Flighting (one Gun)

	February 22.	February 23.	February 24.
Pintails	49	39	68
Wigeon	17	18	5
Shovelers	41	70	2
Teal	10	17	2
Gadwall	1	0	3
Marbled Duck	1	0	0
Garganey	1	1	0
Mallard	0	0	1
	120	145	81 = 346

On the 24th a succession of pintails came in, all *in pairs*. Almost the entire bag of that species was made in double shots.

1903. *March* 4.—Beyond Desierto, Flighting (one Gun)

124 Teal
7 Pintail
2 Mallard
4 Shovelers

Put away many thousands of teal early. These kept coming back in small lots all day. But the wind held wrong all through, and the *Viento de la mar* (= sea-breeze) did not blow up till 5 P.M. Nine camels passed close by.

1904. *November* 8.—Laguna de Santolalla (one Gun)

102 Teal
14 Pochard
3 Gadwall
7 Mallard
3 Shovelers
6 Ferruginous Duck
25 Marbled Duck

Total . 159 Ducks

1905. *November* 8.—(P. Garvey, C. D. W., and B. F. B.)

Santolalla . . . 264 ducks

1905. *December* 3.—Caño Dulce (one Gun)

3 Greylag Geese
121 Wigeon
47 Teal
3 Pintail
3 Shovelers
1 Flamingo

Total . 178

1905–6. Two Days at Caño Dulce (one Gun)

	Dec. 17, 1905.	Feb. 17, 1906.
Wigeon	235	47
Shovelers	10	13
Pintail	18	62
Gadwall	6	0
Teal	2	6
Marbled Duck	1	0
Geese	1	2
	273	130

The total on December 17 represents the "Record," and was made (as was that with geese, see p. 131) by B. F. B.

The whole of the above records refer to flight-shooting with a 12-bore gun.

Following is a list of the different ducks shot by one gun during two consecutive seasons:—

	1902-3.	1903-4.
Wigeon	277	230
Pintail	267	28
Mallard	9	42
Gadwall	21	36
Shovelers	195	32
Teal	276	269
Garganey	2	1
Marbled Duck	4	51
Pochard[1]	1	0
Pochard, Crested	1	0
Tufted Duck	0	1
White-faced Duck	0	1
Unenumerated	191	0
	1244	726

[1] The scarcity of diving-ducks is explained by these having all been shot in the shallow, open marisma. In the deeper waters, such as Santolalla, common and white-eyed pochards, tufted ducks, etc., abound.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPANISH IBEX

In the Spanish ibex Spain possesses not only a species peculiar to the Peninsula, but a game-animal of the first rank.

Fortunate it is that this sentence can be written in the present tense instead of (as but a few years ago appeared probable) in the past.

Since we first wrote on this subject in 1893 the Spanish ibex has passed through a crisis that came perilously near extirpation. Up to the date named, and for several years later, none of the great landowners of Spain, within whose titles were included the vast sierras and mountain-ranges that form its home, had cherished either pride or interest in the Spanish wild-goat. Some were dimly conscious of its existence on their distant domains; but that was all. Not a scintilla of reproach is here inferred. For these mountain-ranges are so remote and so elevated as often to be almost inaccessible—or accessible only by organised expedition independent of local aid. Their sole human inhabitants are a segregated race of goat-herds, every man of them a born hunter, accustomed from time immemorial to kill whenever opportunity offered—and that regardless of size, sex, or season. That the ibex should have survived such persecution by hardy mountaineers bespeaks their natural cunning. Their survival was due to two causes—first, the antiquated weapons employed, but, more important, the astuteness of the game and the "defence" it enjoyed in the stupendous precipices and snow-fields of those sierras, great areas of which remain inaccessible even to specialised goat-herds, save only for a limited period in summer.

But no wild animal, however astute or whatever its "defence," can withstand for ever perpetual, skilled human persecution. During the early years of the present century the Spanish

ibex appeared doomed beyond hope. Private efforts over such vast areas were obviously difficult, if not impossible.

We rejoice to add that at this eleventh hour a new era of existence has been secured to *Capra hispánica* at that precise psychological moment when its scant survivors were struggling in their last throes. The change is due to graceful action by the landowners in certain great mountain-ranges; and if our own explorations and our writings on the subject have also tended to assist, none surely will grudge the authors this expression of pride in having helped, however humbly, to preserve not only to Spain, but to the animal-world, one of its handsomest species.

This new era took different forms in different places. In certain sierras—those of less boundless area—the owners have undertaken the preservation of the ibex partly from their realising the tangible asset this game-beast adds to the value of barren mountain-land, and partly in view of the legitimate sport that an increase in stock may hereafter afford.

But the main factor which has assured success (and which in itself led up to the private efforts just named) took origin in the great Sierra de Grédos. This elevated region is the apex of the long cordillera of central Spain, the Carpeto-Vetonico range, which extends from Moncayo, east of Madrid, for some 300 miles through the Castiles and Estremadura, forming the watershed of Tagus and Douro. It separates the two Castiles, and passing the frontier of Portugal is there known as the Serra da Estrella, which, with the Cintra hills, extends to the Atlantic sea-board. Along all this extensive cordillera there is no more favoured resort of ibex than its highest peak, the Plaza de Almanzór, of 2661 metres altitude (= 8700 feet) above sea-level.

In 1905, when the ibex were about at their last gasp, the proprietors of the *Nucléo central*, which we may translate as the *Heart* of Grédos, of their own initiative, ceded to King Alfonso XIII. the sole rights-of-chase therein, and His Majesty commissioned the Marquis of Villaviciosa de Asturias to appoint an adequate force of guards.

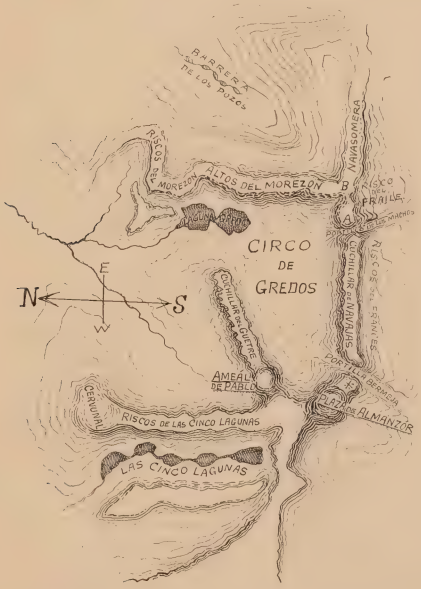
Six guards were selected from the self-same goat-herds who, up to that date, had themselves been engaged in hunting to extermination the last surviving ibex of the sierra, and whom we had ourselves employed during various expeditions therein.

The ceded area comprised all the best game-country, defined

ON THE RISCO DEL FRAILE.

SPANISH IBEX IN SIERRA DE GRÉDOS.

as the "Circo de Grédos"—including the gorge of the Laguna Grande, the Risco del Fraile, Risco del Francés, and that of Ameál de Pablo, together with the wild valley of Las Cinco Lagunas—as shown on rough sketch-plan annexed.



SKETCH-MAP OF THE *NUCLÉO CENTRAL* OF GRÉDOS

(A. *Alto del Casquerázo.* B. *Riscos del Fraile,* with the Hermanitos in front.)

In 1896 we estimated the stock of ibex at fifty head, and during the following years it fell far below that—by 1905 almost to zero. In 1907, after only two years of "sanctuary," it was computed by the guards that the total exceeded 300 head.

In July 1910 we inquired if it were possible to estimate the

present stock. In a letter (the composition of which would cost some anxiety) the Guarda of the Madrigal de la Vera—one portion only of the "sanctuary"—reports: "It is difficult to count the ibex. Sometimes we see more, sometimes less. Yesterday on the Cabeza Nevada we counted 39 rams and 22 females together. On the other side we counted 29 in one troop, 19 in another, 12 in another, besides smaller lots. We probably saw 160 or 170, and we could not see all. Some of the old rams are very big, and it would be advisable that some be shot." Another report (at same date) from the "Hoyos del Espino," estimates the ibex there to exceed 200 head. The two reports go to show that the continuity of the race is fairly secured.

[A similar cession of sole hunting-rights to the King was simultaneously made by the owners of the "Central Group" of the Picos de Europa in Asturias. There are no ibex in that Cantabrian range; the graceful act was there inspired by a desire to preserve the chamois, animals with which we deal in another chapter.]

The Spanish ibex is found at six separate points in the Peninsula, each colony divided from its fellows as effectually as though broad oceans rolled between. The six localities are:—

(1) The Pyrenees—which we have not visited.

(2) Sierra de Grédos, as above defined, and as described in greater detail hereafter.

(3) Sierra Moréna, a single isolated colony near Fuen-Caliente, now preserved (see next chapter).

(4) Sierra Nevada and the Alpuxarras (cf. *infra*).

(5) The mountains along the Mediterranean, which are properly western outliers of Nevada, but which are usually grouped as the "Serrania de Ronda," some lying within sight of Gibraltar. Several of the most important ranges are now preserved by their owners (cf. *infra*).

(6) Valencia, Sierra Martés. This forms a new habitat hitherto unrecorded, and of which we only became aware through the kindness of Mr. P. Burgoyne of Valencia, who has favoured us with the annexed photo of an ibex head killed (along with a smaller example) at Cuevas Altas in the mountain-region known as Peñas Pardas in that province, February 22, 1909. The dimensions read as follows:—

Length along front curves	$21\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Circumference at base	$7\frac{1}{2}$ "
Widest span	$16\frac{3}{8}$ "
Tip to tip	17 "

Our informant has reason to believe that ibex also exist (or existed within recent years) in the rugged mountains of Tortosa, farther east in Catalonia.

In the form of its horns the Spanish ibex differs essentially from the typical ibex of the Alps—now, alas, exterminated save only in the King of Italy's preserved ranges around the Val d'Aosta. In the true ibex the horns bend regularly backwards and downwards in a uniform, scimitar-like curve. In the Spanish species, after first diverging laterally, the horns are recurved both inward and finally upward. That is, in the first case they follow a simple semicircular bend, while in the Spanish goats they form almost a spiral.

A minor point of difference lies in the annular rings or notches which in the true ibex are rectangular, encircling the horn in front like steps in a ladder, while in *Capra hispánica* they rather run obliquely in semi-spiral ascent. These annulations indicate the age of the animal—one notch to each year—but the count must stop where the spiral ends. Beyond that is the lightly grooved tip, which does not alter.

The horns of old rams (which are often broken or worn down at the tips) average 26 to 28 inches, specially fine examples reaching 29 inches or more. The females likewise carry horns, but short and slender, only measuring 6 or 7 inches.

The six isolated colonies of ibex, separated from each other during ages, live under totally different natural conditions. For while some, as stated, exist at 8000, 10,000, or 12,000 feet altitude, others occupy hills of much more moderate elevations —say 4000 to 6000 feet, some of which are bush-clad to their summits. Under such circumstances there have naturally developed divergencies not only in habits, but in form and size. Particularly does this apply to the horns, and for that reason we give a series of photos of typical examples from various points.

The ibex of the Pyrenees is certainly the largest race, and has been entitled by scientists *Capra pyrenaica*; those of the centre and south of Spain being differentiated as *C. hispánica*.

We attach less importance to specific distinctions, but leave the illustrations of specimens to speak for themselves. It may, however, be remarked that examples from the two outside extremes (Pyrenees and Nevada) most closely assimilate in their flattened and compressed form of horn.

Neither in Grédos nor Nevada are the rock-formations so precipitous as in the Picos de Europa in Asturias—described later in this book. They present, nevertheless, difficulties possibly insuperable to mere hunters unskilled in the technique of climbing. Rock-climbing forms a recognised branch of "mountaineering," but of that science the authors (with sorrow be it confessed) have never been enamoured. To us, mountains, merely as such, have not appealed. But they form the home of alpine creatures, the study and acquisition of which were objects that no terrestrial obstacle could entirely forbid, and we enjoy retrospective pride in having so far surmounted those antecedent terrors as to have secured a few specimens of this, the most "impossible" of European trophies—the Spanish ibex.

An awkward situation is a subrounded wall of rough granulated granite blocking our course and traversed obliquely by an up-trending fissure barely the breadth of hempen soles, its inclination outward, and the "tread" carpeted with slippery wet moss still half frozen. It is seldom what one can *see* that gives pause, but the fear of the unseen. Here we hesitate by reason of the uncertainty of what may confront beyond that grim curve. The fissure might cease; to turn back would clearly be impossible. Impatient of delay our crag-born guide—a *homo rupestris*, prehensile of foot—seized the gun, and with a muttered ejaculation that might have included scorn, in three strides had skipt around the dreaded corner—of course we followed.

Snow-slopes tipped at steep angles never inspire confidence in the unaxed climber, especially when the surface is half melted, revealing green ice beneath, and when the disappearing curve conceals from view what dangers may lurk below. Again a suddenly interrupted ledge—say where some great block has become disintegrated from the hanging face—necessitates a sort of nervy jump quite calculated to shorten one's days, even if it does not precipitately terminate them.

The ibex is always nocturnal. On the great cordilleras it spends its day asleep on some rock-ledge isolated amidst snow-

fields, its security doubly assured by sentinels, whenever such are deemed necessary: or, lower down, in the caves of a sheer precipice. Only after sun-down do the ibex descend, and never, even then, so far as timber-line. On these loftier sierras their home by day is confined to rock and snow; by night to that zone of moss, heath, and alpine vegetation that intervenes between the snow-line and topmost levels of scrub and conifer.

Such are the ibex of the loftier ranges—Grédos and Nevada. But in the south, wild-goats are found on mountains of inferior elevation, 4000 to 6000 feet, many of which are jungled—some even forested—to their summits, and there they cannot disdain the shelter of the scrub. We have hunted them (within sight of the Mediterranean) in ground that appeared more suitable to roe-deer, and have seen the "rootings" of wild-pig within the ibex-holding area.

In such situations the wild-goats take quite kindly to the scrub, forming regular "lairs" wherein they lie-up as close as hares or roe. Amidst the brushwood that clothes the highland —heaths and broom, genista, rhododendron, lentiscus, and a hundred other shrubs—they rest by day and browse by night without having to descend or shift their quarters at all. On these lower hills the ibex owe their safety, and survival, to the vast area of covert, and, in less degree, to their comparatively small numbers. So few are they and so big their home, they are considered "not worth hunting."

During summer the ibex feed on the mountain-grasses, rush, and flowering shrubs which at that season adorn the alpine solitudes; later, on the berries and wild-fruits of the hill. By autumn they attain their highest condition—the beards of the rams fully developed and their brown pelts glossy and almost uniform in colour. At this period (September to October) the rutting season occurs and fighting takes place—the champions rearing on hind-legs for a charge, and the crash of opposing horns resounds across the corries of the sierra. Even in spring memories of the combative instinct survive, for we have watched, in April, a pair of veterans sparring at each other for half an hour.

The young are born in April and soon follow their dams—graceful creatures with unduly large hind-legs, like brown lambs.

One is the usual number, though two are not infrequent. The kid remains with its dam upwards of a year—that is, till after a second family has been born.

At that season (April to May) the ibex are changing their coats. The males lose the flowing beard and assume a hoary piebald colour, contrasting with the dark of legs and quarters. The muzzle is warm cream colour and the lower leg (below knee) prettily marked with black and white. On the knee is a callosity, or round patch of bare hardened skin. The horns of yearling males are thicker and heavier than those of adult females.

Though the hill-shepherds in summer drive out their herds of goats to pasture on the higher sierra, where they may come in contact with their wild congeners, yet no interbreeding has ever been known; nor can the wild ibex be domesticated. Wild kids that are captured invariably die before attaining maturity. The horns of the herdsmen's goats differ in type from those of the ibex, which can never have been the progenitor of the race of goats now domesticated in Spain.

Though the personal aroma of an ibex-ram is strong—rather more offensive than that of a vulture—yet no trace of this remains after cooking. The flesh is brown and tough, but devoid of any special flavour or individuality—that is, when subjected to the rude cookery of the camp.

CHAPTER XIV

SIERRA MORÉNA

IBEX

The tourist speeding along the Andalucian railways and surveying from his carriage-window the olive-clad and altogether mild-looking slopes of the Sierra Moréna, will form no adequate, much less a romantic, conception of that great mountain-system of which he sees but the southern fringe. Yet, in fact, the train hurries him past within a few leagues of perhaps the finest big-game country in Spain—of mountain-solitudes and a thousand jungled corries, wherein lurk fierce wolves and giant boars, together with one of the grandest races of red deer yet extant in Europe.

True, the Sierra Moréna lacks both the altitudes and the stupendous rock-ridges that characterise all other Spanish sierras—from Neváda and Grédos to the Pyrenees. It consists rather of a congeries of jumbled mountain-ranges of no great elevations, but of infinite ramification, and lacking (save at two points only) those bolder features that most appeal to the eye. Were the Spanish ranges all of the contour of Moréna, the name "Sierra" would not have applied. It is, moreover, a unilateral range—a buttress, banked up on its northern side by the highlands of La Mancha, resembling in that respect the well-known Drakensberg of the Transvaal.

The Sierra Moréna, typical yet apart, divides for upwards of 300 miles the sunny lowlands of Andalucia from the bare, bleak uplands of La Mancha on the north. And in vertical depth (if we may include the contiguous Montes de Toledo) the range extends but little short of 150 miles.

As a homogeneous mountain-system, Moréna thus covers a space equal to the whole of England south of the Thames, with

a central northern projection which would embrace all the Midland Counties as far as Nottingham!

[In any survey of the Sierra Moréna, it is appropriate to include the adjoining Montes de Toledo. They, as just stated, form a north-trending pyramidal apex based on the main chain and presenting identical characteristics, both physical and faunal, though of lower general elevation. The Montes de Toledo, in short, are an intricate complication of low subrounded hills—rather than mountains—tacked on to the north of Moréna, all scrub-clad and inhabited by the same wild beasts. Toledan stags exhibit the same magnificent cornual development, and there is evidence of seasonal intermigration as between two adjacent regions only divided by the valley of the Guadiana—a shortage in one area being sometimes found to be compensated by a corresponding increase in the other. Roe-deer are more abundant in the lower range; but the sole clean-cut faunal distinction lies in the presence of wild fallow-deer in the Montes de Toledo—these animals being quite unknown in Moréna.[1]]

May we digress on a cognate subject? The Sierra Neváda, though so near (at one point the two ranges are merely separated by a narrow gap ycleept Los Llanos de Jaén), yet presents totally divergent natural phenomena.

There are points in Moréna—say from the heights above Despeñaperros—whence the two systems can be surveyed at once. Behind you, on the north, roll away, ridge beyond ridge, the endless rounded skylines of Moréna—colossal yet never abrupt. In front, to the south—apparently within stone's-throw—rise the stupendous snow-peaks of Neváda—jagged pinnacles piercing the heavens to nigh 12,000 feet.

These peaks may appear within stone's-throw, or say an easy day's ride, though that is an optical illusion. But narrow as it is, that gap of Jaén divides two mountain-regions utterly dissimilar in every attribute, whether as to the manner of their birth in remote ages and the landscapes they present to-day.

Faunal distinctions are also conspicuous. In Neváda there are found neither deer of any kind (whether red, roe, or fallow)

[1] The Montes de Toledo comprise some of the best big-game country in Spain and include several of her most famous preserves; such, for example, as the Coto de Cabañeros belonging to the Conde de Valdelagrana, El Castillo, a domain of the Duke of Castillejos, and Zumajo of the Marques de Alventos. The Duke of Arión possesses a wild tract inhabited by fallow-deer.

nor wild-boar, whereas it forms the selected home of ibex and lammergeyer, both of which are conspicuous by their absence from Moréna, save for a single segregated colony of wild-goats near Fuen-Caliente.

Although the Sierra Moréna partakes rather of massive than of abrupt character, yet there occur at a couple of points outcrops of naked rock of real grandeur. Such, for example, is Despeñaperros, through whose gorges the Andalucian railway threads a semi-subterranean course. The very name Despeñaperros signifies in that wondrously adaptive Spanish tongue nothing less than that its living rocks threaten to hurl to death and destruction even dogs that venture thereon.

Another interpretation suggests that in olden days, such were the pleasantries of the Moors, it was not dogs, but Christians (since to a Moor the terms were synonymous) that were hurled to their death from the *riscos* of Despeñaperros.

These rock-formations are superbly abrupt. Great detached crags, massive and moss-marbled, jut perpendicular from ragged steeps, or vast monoliths protrude, each in rectilineal outline so exact that one wonders if these are truly of nature's handiwork, and not some fabled fortalice of old-time Goth or Moor. Despite its striking contour, however, its crags and precipices are too scattered and detached (with traversable intervals between) to attract such a rock-lover as the ibex, and no wild-goat has ever occupied the gorges of Despeñaperros.

A similar rock-region, but more extensive and continuous, is found near Fuen-Caliente—by name the Sierra Quintána. This range, though its elevations barely exceed 7000 feet, forms the only spot in the Sierra Moréna at which the Spanish ibex retains a foothold.

Thereat the writer in 1901 endured one of those evil experiences which from time to time befall those who seek hunting-grounds in the wilder corners of the earth. It was in mid-February that, forced by bitter extremity of weather, we fain sought refuge in the hamlet of Fuen-Caliente clinging at 5700 feet on the steep of the sierra, as crag-martins fix their clay-built nests on some rock-face. Fuen-Caliente dates back to Roman days. Warm springs, as its name implies, here burst from riven rock, and stone baths, built by no modern hand,

attest a bygone enterprise. To this day, we are told, the baths of Fuen-Caliente attract summer-visitors; we trust their health benefits thereby. Surely some counter-irritation is needed to balance the perils of a sojourn within that unsavoury eyrie. We write feelingly, even after all these years, and after suffering assorted tribulations in many a rough spot—Fuen-Caliente is bad to beat.

Having tents and full camp-outfit, we had thought to live independent of the village *posada*. One night, however, as we climbed the rising ground that leads to the higher sierra there burst in our faces an easterly gale (*levante*), with driving snow-storms that even a mule could not withstand. Nothing remained but to seek shelter in the village below.

Here my bedroom measured twelve feet by four, with a door at each end. The door proper was reached by a vertical ladder; the second might perhaps be differentiated as a window, but could only be distinguished as such by its smaller size—both being made of solid wood. Thus, were the window open, snow swirled through as freely as on the open sierra; if shut, we lived in darkness dimly relieved by the flicker of a *mariposa*, that is, a cotton-wick reposing in a saucer of olive-oil. Under such conditions, with other nameless horrors, we passed three days and nights while gales blew and snow swirled by incessant.

On the fourth morning the wind fell, and snow had given place to fine rain. These *levantes* usually last either three or nine days; so, thinking this one had blown itself out, we packed the kit and set out in renewed search of ibex, Caraballo, with accustomed forethought, buying a bunch of live chickens, which hung by their legs from the after-pannier of the mule. On the limited area of Quintána, ibex offer the best chance of stalking.

Mules are marvellous mountaineers. The places that animal surmounted to-day passed belief. Two donkeys that belonged to the local hunters, Abad and Brijido, who accompanied us, soon got stuck, and had to be left below.

By three o'clock we, mule and all, had reached the highest ridge of Quintána, and encamped within a few hundred feet of its top-most *riscos*.

To set up a tent among rocks is never easy; even specially made iron tent-pegs find no hold, and guy-ropes have to be made fast, as securely as may be, to any projecting point.

Hardly had the sun gone down, than the easterly gale blew up again with redoubled force. All night it howled through our narrow gorge and around its pinnacled rock-minarets, with the result that at 11 P.M. the ill-secured guys gave way, and down came our tent with a crash. Two hours were spent (in drenching rain) remedying this; and when day broke, an icy *neblina* (fog) enveloped the sierra, shutting out all view beyond a few yards. The cold was intense, and a little dam we had engineered the night before was frozen thick. The fog held all that day and the next. Nothing could be done, though we persisted in going out each day, as in duty bound, for a few hours' turn among the crags—how we prayed for *one* hour's clear interval that might have given that glorious sight we sought! At dusk the second night snow fell heavily, and later on a thunderstorm added to our joys. Frequent and vivid flashes of lightning lit up the darkness, and caused the surviving chickens (which in common charity we had had tethered inside the tent) to crow so incessantly that sleep was impossible. Presently we noticed a sharp fall in temperature—the men had brought in a cube of ice, the solidified contents of one of our camp-buckets, which they proposed to melt at a little fire kept burning in the tent! But this was too much, even though it meant "no coffee for breakfast."

The frost and fog continuing, on the third morning the men proposed we should move lower down the hill, to some *cortijo* they knew of, thereat to await milder weather.

By this time, however, the cold had penetrated deep into throat and chest, which felt raw and inflamed, leaving the writer almost speechless. We therefore decided to abandon the whole venture, and struck camp, still wrapt in that opaque shroud of driving sleet.

Crossing over the highest ridge of the sierra, between crags of which only the bases were visible, we descended on the south side; here we organised a "drive" amid the jungles that clothe the lower slopes. Two lynxes and three pigs were reported as seen by the beaters. Only one of the latter, however, came to the gun, and proved to be a sow, bigger by half than any wild-pig we had then seen in Spain. We regretted having no means of weighing this beast, which we estimated at well over 200 lbs. clean. A remarkable cast antler picked up at this spot

carried four points on the main beam, as well as four on top—length 34⅛ inches, by 5¾ inches basal circumference.

The "defences" of the ibex in the Sierra Quintana lie among some fairly big crags forming the eastern and southern faces of the range. The shooting at that time was free; hence the goats were never left in peace by the mountaineers, who all carried guns, and used them whenever a chance presented itself. The result was that the few surviving goats had become severely nocturnal in habit, spending the entire day in caves and crevices in the faces of sheer and naked precipices.

Some of their eyries appeared absolutely inaccessible to any creature unendowed with wings. One cave, though it had no visible approach, was situate only some eight or ten feet above a ledge in the perpendicular rock-face. One morning at dawn two ibex having been seen to enter this cave, at once a couple of the wiry goat-herds thought to reach them from the ledge below, one lad actually climbing on to the other's shoulders as he stood on that narrow shelf. In its rush to escape, however, the leading ibex upset the precarious balance, and the poor lad was precipitated among the tumbled rocks in the abyss below.

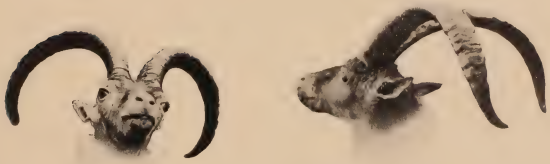
Riding homewards through inhospitable brush-clad hills towards the railway (forty miles away), we put up one night at a village named, with unconscious irony, Cardeña Real. In the small hours broke out another terrific disturbance—shrieks, squeals, barking—all the dogs gone mad. The night was pitch-dark with rain falling in torrents; but next morning we ascertained that a pack of wolves had carried off the landlord's pigs from their stye, not fifteen yards away—indeed, three mangled porkers lay piled up against the wall of our hovel.

The contingency of pigs being worse off than ourselves had not previously occurred to us. Thus ended, in a cycle of catastrophe, our first wrestle with *Capra hispánica* in Moréna; but initial failure only served to stimulate further efforts later on. Winter, moreover, is no season for camping in these high sierras; May is more favourable, but the early autumn is best of all.

At this period (1901) the surviving ibex had fallen to a mere handful. Fortunately here, as elsewhere in Spain, there was aroused, within the next five years, the tardy interest of Spanish landowners to save them.

The owner of the sierras above mentioned (the Marquis del

(A) Sierra de Grédos—Madrigal de la Vera.
Length 26½ in. Circum. 10⅛ in. Tips, 22½ in.



(B) Sierra Nevada.
Length 29⅞ in. Circum. 8⅛ in. Tips, 20⅞ in.

(C) Sierra de Grédos, Bohoyo.
29¾ in.

(D) Valencia, Sierra Martes.
21⅞ in.

HEADS OF SPANISH IBEX.

Mérito) has favoured us with latest details respecting both the ibex and other wild beasts therein.

The wild-goat (he writes) is the most difficult of all game to shoot, proof of which is afforded by the fact that in the lands which I hold in the Sierra Quintána (although until recent years these were unpreserved and in the neighbourhood of a village where every man was a hunter) yet the local shooters had not succeeded in exterminating the species. Its means of defence, over and above its keen sight and scent, consist chiefly in the inaccessible natural caves of those mountains, in which the wild-goats invariably seek refuge the moment they find themselves pursued. In these caves the goats were accustomed to pass the entire day, never coming out to feed except during the night.

To-day (since free shooting has ceased) they begin to show up a little during daylight, and in other ways demonstrate a returning confidence. Nevertheless they display not the slightest inclination to abandon their old tendency to betake themselves, immediately on the appearance of danger, to the vast crags and precipices which lie towards the east of the sierra, and which crags afford them almost complete security. The most effective method of securing a specimen to-day is, as you know, by stalking (*rescheo*). For this animal, when it finds itself suddenly surprised by a human being, is less startled than deer, or other game, and usually allows sufficient time for careful aim to be taken—indeed, it seems to be the more alarmed when it has lost sight of the intruder.

The rutting season occurs in November and December, and the kids, usually one or two in number, are born in May, the same as domestic goats. These kids have a terrible enemy in the golden eagles, since their birth coincides with the period when these rapacious birds have their own broods to feed, and when they become more savage than ever. To reduce the damage thus done, I am now paying to the guards a reward for every eagle destroyed, and this last spring took myself a nest containing one eaglet, shooting both its parents.

The dimensions of horns I am unable to put down with precision, but there was killed here an ibex (which was mounted by Barrasóna at Córdoba) measuring 85 centimetres in length (= $33\frac{1}{2}$ inches). Of the last, which was killed by Lord Hindlip, as shown in photo I send, the length of horns was 68 centimetres (= $26\frac{3}{4}$ inches).

The dimensions of the best ibex head obtained by us in this sierra were: Length, 28 inches; basal circumference, $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Wolves

These animals, which perpetrate incredible destruction to game, are very abundant in Moréna, yet rarely shot in the *monterías* (mountain-drives). This is not due to any special astuteness of the wolf, but simply because, while waiting for deer, sportsmen naturally lie very low, thus giving opportunity to wolves to pass unseen; while, on the other hand, when boars only are expected, and sportsmen therefore remain less concealed, the wolf is apt to detect the danger before arriving within shot.

In May and June the she-wolves produce their young; but it is difficult to discover these broods, since at that period they betake themselves to remote regions far away from the haunts frequented in normal times.

There is, however, one method of discovering them which is known to the mountaineers as the *otéo*, or watching for them over-night, thus noting precisely where each she-wolf gives tongue. If on the following morning the howl is repeated at the same spot, it is a practical certainty that that wolf will have her brood in that immediate neighbourhood.

Thereupon at daybreak the hunters proceed to examine every bush and brake in the marked spot, which invariably consists either of strong brushwood or broken rocks. All around the actual lair for a hundred yards the ground is traced with foot-prints and scratchings, which usually lead to its discovery; but should it not be found that day, it is completely useless to seek for it on the following, since the moment that a she-wolf perceives that her whelps are being sought, she at once removes them far away. To exterminate wolves, strychnine is extensively used, giving positive results.[1] At the same time it is always better to supplement its use by searching out with practical men the broods of wolf-cubs at their proper season.

The photo facing p. 158 shows a magnificent old dog-wolf, scaling 93 lbs. dead-weight, which we obtained in the Sierra Moréna, near Córdoba, in March 1909.

[1] Thirteen wolves were killed thus (and recovered) on the property of the Marquis del Mérito in the winter of 1906-7.

Lynx, or *Gato Cerval*

This animal breeds in April and May, and the number of young is generally two. If captured, the majority of the young lynxes die at the period when they change from a milk diet to solid food, and one may imagine that the same thing happens in the case of the wild lynxes, since otherwise it is difficult to explain why an animal, whose only enemy is mankind, should remain so scarce. Their food consists of partridges, rabbits, and other small game.

Red Deer

With the red deer of these mountains, as elsewhere in Spain, the rut (*celo*) depends upon the autumn, which season may be earlier or later; but the *celo* always takes place between mid-September and mid-October. The calves are born at end of May or early in June, and suckled by their mothers till the following autumn.

The casting of the horns, together with the change of hair, varies in date, depending on the state of health in each individual. It generally occurs in May, but in very robust animals we have seen cases in April, and in the *barétos*, or stags of one year, in March. The development of the new horn is complete by the end of July, and in August occurs the shedding of the velvet. The horn at first is of a white bone-colour, but gradually darkens, the final colour depending on the nature of the bush frequented, the blackest being found in those stags which inhabit the gum-cistus (*jarales*).

Although it is currently believed among country folk that the age of a stag can be determined by the number of his points, this is incorrect, the horn development depending solely on the robustness of the animal. It frequently happens that a stag carries fewer points than he did the year before.

When the hinds are about to bring forth, they isolate themselves, seeking spots where the brushwood is less dense, and leaving the calf concealed in some bush. The habits of a hind when giving her offspring its first lessons in the arts of concealment and caution are interesting to watch. Shortly after daybreak the mother suddenly performs a series of wild, convulsive

bounds, leaping away over the bush as though in presence of visible peril, thus alarming the youngster and teaching it to seek cover for itself. This performance is repeated at intervals until the calf has learnt to lie-up, when the hind will do the same, but at some distance, although in view. She only allows her progeny to accompany her when it has acquired sufficient strength and agility to follow, which is the case some twenty or thirty days after birth.

Having noted the spoor of a single hind at the breeding-time, one may follow to the spot where she is suckling her young. But so soon as one observes the prints of these spasmodic jumps with which the mother instils into her offspring a sense of caution (as above described), one may then begin leisurely to examine every bush round about. In one of these the calf will be found lying curled up without a bed and with its nose resting on its hip.[1] It will at first offer some slight resistance, but once captured, may be set free with the certainty that it will not make any attempt to escape.

The only enemies the full-grown stag has to fear are mankind and the wolf, but chiefly the latter, since not only do single wolves destroy in this sierra large numbers of the newly born calves, but, worse still, when a troop of wolves have once tasted venison they commence habitually to hunt both hinds and even the younger stags, which they persistently follow day after day till the deer are absolutely worn out. They then pull them down, the final scene usually occurring in some deep ravine or mountain burn.

The calves of red deer, as happens with ibex kids, are also preyed upon by golden eagles.

Deer-Shooting

As regards sport, the best results are only attainable by *monterías*, or extended drives, assuming that the district is thickly jungled, and generally of elevated situation. There is also a system of shooting at the "roaring-time," but that is uncertain owing to the rapidity of the stag's movements, the thick bush, and the risk of his getting the wind. Practised

[1] Similarly the half-wild cattle of Spain leave their new-born calves concealed in some bush or palmetto, the mother going off for a whole day and only returning at sunset.

Zamujar, Jaën.
Points 16. Length 38¾ in.

Valdelagrana.
Points 16. Length 40⅝ in.

Sierra Quintana.
Points 15. Length 37½ in.

Risquillo.
Points 14. Length 36¾ in.

RED DEER HEADS, SIERRA MORÉNA.

trackers are in the habit of hunting *á la greña*, which consists in observing the deer at daybreak, selecting a good stag, and afterwards following his spoor at midday (at which hour deer, while enjoying their siesta, are quite apt to lie close) and shooting as he springs from his lair (*al arrancár*).

A really big stag is nearly always found alone, or should he have a companion, the second will also be an animal of large size. Such stags are never seen with hinds, excepting in the autumn (*celo*).

The system of the *montería*, or mountain-drive, is described in detail in the following chapter.

TABLE OF SPANISH IBEX HEADS

Measured by the Authors, or other stated Authority.

Locality.	Length.	Width.		Circumference.	Authority.
		Tips.	Inside.		
	ins.	ins.	ins.	ins.	
Moréna	$33\frac{1}{2}$	...	...	...	Marq. Mérito (p. 158).
Pyrenees	31	$26\frac{1}{2}$	...	$8\frac{3}{4}$	Sir V. Brooke.
Neváda	$29\frac{3}{4}$	$22\frac{1}{2}$	$20\frac{7}{8}$	$8\frac{1}{4}$	At Madrid.
Grédos [1]	$29\frac{1}{4}$	$23\frac{1}{4}$	...	$9\frac{1}{2}$	Authors.
Do.	$29\frac{1}{8}$	$23\frac{1}{8}$	21	$9\frac{7}{8}$	M. Amezúa.
Do.	29	$22\frac{1}{2}$	...	$9\frac{1}{4}$	Authors.
Pyrenees	29	23	...	10	Sir V. Brooke.
Neváda [1]	29	23	$18\frac{3}{4}$	9	Authors.
Do.	$28\frac{1}{4}$	$24\frac{1}{2}$	22	$9\frac{1}{16}$	Do.
Moréna	$28\frac{1}{2}$	...	...	$8\frac{1}{4}$	Do.
Bermeja	28	19	...	$8\frac{1}{4}$	Do.
Moréna	$26\frac{3}{4}$	...	...	...	Lord Hindlip.
Grédos	$26\frac{1}{2}$	...	$22\frac{1}{8}$	$10\frac{1}{8}$	At Madrid.
Pyrenees	26	21	...	10	Sir V. Brooke.
Sa. Blanca	26	...	...	$8\frac{3}{4}$	P. Larios.
Grédos	$24\frac{1}{8}$	...	...	$8\frac{1}{2}$	Authors.
Pyrenees	$22\frac{3}{4}$	$18\frac{3}{4}$	...	$9\frac{1}{2}$	E. N. Buxton.
Sa. Blanca	22	...	14	$7\frac{3}{4}$	P. Larios.
Valencia	$21\frac{3}{4}$	$16\frac{3}{8}$	17	$7\frac{7}{8}$	P. Burgoyne.

[1] Photos given in *Wild Spain*.

CHAPTER XV

SIERRA MORÉNA (*Continued*)

RED DEER AND BOAR

THE mountain deer of the Sierra Moréna are the grandest of their kind in Spain, and will compare favourably with any truly wild deer in Europe.[1] The drawings, photographs, and measurements given in this chapter prove so much, but no mere numerals convey an adequate conception of these magnificent harts, as seen in the full glory of life bounding in unequal leaps over some rocky pass, or picking more deliberate course up a stone stairway.

Massive as they are in body (weighing, say, 300 lbs. clean), yet even so the giant antlers appear almost disproportionate in length and superstructure.

The whole Sierra Moréna being clad with brushwood and jungle, thicker in places, but nowhere clear, shooting is practically confined to "driving" on that extensive scale termed, in Spanish phrase, *montería*.

Before describing two or three typical experiences of our own in this sierra, we attempt a sketch of the system of the *montería* as practised throughout Spain.

The area of operations being immense and clad with almost continuous thicket, it is customary to employ two or three separate packs (termed *rehâles*, or *recôbas*), counting in all as many as seventy or eighty hounds. The extra packs—beyond that belonging to the host—are brought by shooting guests, and each pack has its own huntsman (*perréro*), whom alone his own

[1] We exclude from consideration all deer that are winter-fed or otherwise assisted, and of course all that have been "improved" by crosses with extraneous blood. These mountain deer of Spain are true native aborigines, unaltered and living the same wild life as they lived here in Roman days and in ages before.

Wolf shot Sierra Moréna, March, 1909—weight 93 lb.

Huntsman with Caracola, Sierra Moréna.

Pack of Podencos, Sierra Moréna. (Coupled in pairs.)

hounds[1] will follow or recognise. The huntsmen (though not the beaters) are mounted, and each carries a musket and a *caracóla*, or hunting-horn formed of a big sea-shell. The forelegs of the horses, where necessary—especially in Estremadura—are enveloped in leather sheaths (*fundas de cuero*) to protect them from the terrible thorns and the spikes of burnt cistus which pierce and cut like knives. The best dogs are *podencos* of the bigger breeds, also crosses between *podencos* and mastiffs, and between mastiffs and *alanos*, the latter a race of rough-haired bull-dogs largely used in Estremadura for "holding-up" the boar.

The huntsmen with their packs, and the beaters, usually start with the dawn, sometimes long before, dependent on the distance to be traversed to their points, which may be ten or twelve miles. Till reaching the cast-off, hounds are coupled up in pairs: a collar fitted with a bell (*cencerro*) is then substituted, and the alignment being completed—each pack at its appointed spot—at a given hour the beat begins.

On every occasion when a game-beast is raised a blank shot is fired to encourage the hounds, and the who-hoops of the huntsmen behind resound for miles around. Should the animal hold a forward course (as desired), the hounds are shortly recalled by the *caracólas*, or hunting-horns aforesaid, and the beat is then reformed and resumed.

Meanwhile—far away at remote posts prearranged—the firing-line (*armáda*) has already occupied its allotted positions; the guns most often disposed along the crests of some commanding ridge, sometimes defiled in a narrow pass of the valley far below.

Should the number of guns be insufficient to command the whole front, the expedient of placing a second firing-line (termed the *travérsa*), projected into the beat, and at a right angle from the centre of the first line, is sometimes effective.

It may occur to those accustomed to deal with mountain-game on a large scale that the chance of moving animals with any sort of accuracy towards a scant line of guns scattered over vast areas must be remote. True, the number of guns—even ten or twelve—is necessarily insufficient, but here local knowledge and the skill of Spanish mountaineers (by nature among the best

[1] We here use the term hound or dog indiscriminately as, in the altering circumstances, each is equally applicable and correct.

guerrilleros on earth) comes effectively into play. In practice it is seldom that the best "passes" are not commanded.

In the higher ranges skylines are frequently pierced by nicks or "passes" (termed *portillas*) sufficiently marked as to suggest, even to a stranger possessed of an eye for such things, the probable lines of retreat for moving game. But "passes" are not always conspicuous, nor are all skylines of broken contour. On the contrary, there frequently present themselves long summits that to casual glance appear wholly uniform. Here comes to aid that local intuition referred to, nor will it be found lacking. Many a long hill-ridge apparently featureless may (and often does) include several well-frequented passes. Some slight sense of disappointment may easily lurk in one's breast in surveying one's allotted post to perceive not a single sign of "advantage" within its radius—or "jurisdiction," as Spanish keepers quaintly put it. Yet it may be after all—and probably is—the apex of a congeries of converging watercourses, glens, or other accustomed *salidas* (outlets), all of which are invisible in the unseen depths on one's front; but which salient points in cynegetic geography are perfectly appreciated by our guide.

The brushwood of Moréna consists over vast areas—many hundreds of square miles—of the gum-cistus, a sticky-leaved shrub that grows shoulder-high on the stoniest ground. Wherever a slightly more generous soil permits, the cistus is interspersed and thickened with rhododendron, brooms, myrtle, and a hundred cognate plants. On the richer slopes and dells there crowd together a matted jungle of lentisk and arbutus, white buck-thorn and holly, all intertwined with vicious prehensile briar and woodbine, together with heaths, genista, giant ferns, and gorse of a score of species. Watercourses are overarched by oleanders, and the chief trees are cork-oak and ilex, wild-olive, juniper, and alder, besides others of which we only know the Spanish names, quejigos, algarrobas, agracejis, etc.

Naturally, in such rugged broken ground as the sierras, where the guns are protected by intervening heights, shooting is permissible in any direction, whether in front or behind, and even sometimes along the line itself. A survival of savage days, when beaters didn't count, is suggested by a refrain of the sierra :—

Más vale matár un Cristiano
Que no dejár ir una res—

(Rather should a Christian die
Than let a head of game pass by.)

A word here as to the game and its habits. The lairs of wild-boar are invariably in the densest jungle and on the shaded slope where no sun ever penetrates. There is always at hand, moreover, a ready *salida*, or exit, along some deep watercourse or by a rocky ravine or gully—rarely do these animals show up in the open, or even in ground of scanty covert. It is usually the strongest arbutus-thickets (*madronales*) that they select for their quarters.

It is seldom that wild-boar are "held-up" by the dogs during a beat—the old tuskers never.

Deer, on the contrary, avoid the denser jungle, lying-up in more open brushwood and invariably on the sunny slope. Though their "beds" (*camas*) may be on the lower ground, they invariably seek the heights when disturbed, and then select a course through the lighter cistus-scrub or across open screes, knowing instinctively that thus they can travel fastest and best throw off the pursuing pack.

Owing to the wide areas of each beat, a *montería* in the sierras is confined to a single drive each day, the guns usually reaching their posts about eleven o'clock, and remaining therein till late in the afternoon. In the lowlands, as already described, four, five, and even six *batidas* (drives) are sometimes possible during the day.

A *Montería* at Mezquitillas (Province of Córdoba)

A glorious ride amid splendid mountain scenery all lit up with southern sunshine—the narrow bridle-track now forms a mere tunnel hewn out of impending foliage; anon it descends abrupt rock-faces, in zigzags like a corkscrew, apt to make nerves creep, when one false step would precipitate horse and rider into a half-seen torrent hundreds of feet below. Some eight miles of this, and by eleven o'clock we have reached our positions at Los Llanos del Peco.

These positions extend for over a league in length (there are twelve guns), occupying the crests and "passes" of a lofty ridge whence one enjoys a bird's-eye view of a world of wild mountain-land.

My own post commanded a panorama of almost the whole

day's operation, excepting only that on my immediate front there yawned a deep ravine (*cañada*) into the full depth of which I could not see.

Already within a few minutes one had become aware, by a far-distant shot, and by the echoing note of the bugle faintly borne on a gentle northerly breeze, that the beat had begun. At dawn that morning the four huntsmen, each with his pack, had left the lodge, and are now encircling some seven or eight miles of covert on our front, two-thirds of which lay beneath my gaze.

For five hours I occupied that *puesto* sitting between convenient rocks, and hardly a measurable spell of the five hours but I was held alert, either by the actual sight of game afoot—far distant, it is true—or by the shots and bugle-calls of the hunters and the music of their packs—all signs of game on the move.

It is instructive, though rarely possible, to watch wild game thus, when danger threatens, and to observe the wiles by which they seek escape—doubling back on their own tracks till nearly face to face with the baying *podencos*, and then, by a smart flank-movement, skirting round behind the pack, till actually between the latter and the following huntsmen; then lying flat, awaiting till perchance the latter has gone by! That is our stag's plan—bold and comprehensive—yet it fails when that huntsman, biding his time, perceives that his pack have overrun the scent and recalls them to make quite sure of that intervening bit of bush—poor staggie! Rarely indeed, even in mountain-lands, do such chances of watching the whole play (and bye-play) occur as those we enjoyed to-day on the Llanos del Peco. Shots are apt to be quite difficult, as all bushes and many trees are in full leaf (January) and the *rayas*, or rides cut out along the shooting-line, barely twenty yards broad. To-day, moreover, the wind shifting from north to east operated greatly to our disadvantage—practically, in effect, ruined the plan.

The first stag that came my way had already touched the tainted breeze ere I saw him—being slightly deaf (the effects of quinine) I had not heard his approach. Instantly he crossed the

Wild-Boar—weight 200 lbs., clean.

The Record Head—43 inches—Lugar Nuevo, Nov. 14, 1909.
SIERRA MORENA.

raya, 100 yards away, in two enormous bounds. There was just time to see glorious antlers with many-forked tops ere he dived from sight, plunging into ten-foot scrub.

I had fired both barrels, necessarily with but an apology for an aim and the second purely "at a venture." Three minutes later resounded the tinkling *cencerros* (bells) of the *podencos*, and when two of these hounds had followed the spoor ahead, all *mute*, then I knew that both bullets had spent their force on useless scrub.

Fortune favoured. Half an hour afterwards, a second stag followed. This time a gentle rustle in the bush, and one clink of

AZURE-WINGED MAGPIE

a hoof on rock had caught my faulty ear. Then coroneted antlers showed up from the depths below, and so soon as the great brown body came in view, a bullet on the shoulder at short range dropped him dead. This was an average stag, weighing 255 lbs. clean, but although "royal," carried a smaller head than that first seen. Later, two other big stags descended together into the unseen depths on my front, but whither they subsequently took their course—*quien sabe?* I saw them no more.

The only other animal that crossed my line during the day was a mongoose, but objects of interest never lacked. Close behind my post, a huge stick-built nest filled a small ilex. This was the ancestral abode of a pair of griffons, and its owners were already busy renewing their home, though my presence sadly disconcerted them. Hereabouts these vultures breed regularly *on trees*, a most unusual habit, due presumably to the lack of

suitable crags which elsewhere form their invariable nesting-site. Cushats and robins lent an air of familiarity to the scene, while azure-winged magpies—a species peculiarly Spanish—hopped and chattered hard by, curiosity overcoming fear. There were also pretty Sardinian warblers, with long tails and a white nuchal spot like a coal-tit. Other birds seen in this sierra include merlin and kestrel, green woodpecker, jay, blackbird, thrush, redwing, woodlark, and chaffinch; and on off-days we shot a few red-legged partridges.

The two packs employed to-day numbered forty—twenty-four big and sixteen small *podencos*, all yellow and white, the larger having a cross of mastiff. That evening two of the best in the pack were missing—"Capitan," killed by a boar in the *mancha*; the other returned during the night, fearfully wounded, one foreleg almost severed.

SARDINIAN WARBLER

The head-keeper told us that these *podencos* fear the he-wolf. They will run keenly on his scent, but never dare to close with him as they do with boar. Yet curiously they have been known to fraternise with the she-wolf, and in no case will they attack, but rather incline to caress her.

It was estimated by the drivers that eighty head of big-game (*reses*) were viewed to-day. Thirty-two shots were fired, but only my one stag was killed. Had the wind held steady, much better results were probable.[1] Included among the guests at Mezquitillas—and they represented rank and learning, arms, State, and Church—was a genial and imposing personality in the poet laureate of Spain, Sr. D. Antonio Cavestany, who celebrated this delightful if somewhat unlucky day in a series of graceful couplets. We are wholly unequal to translate, but copy two or three which readers who understand Spanish will appreciate:—

[1] I never myself count shots, hits or misses—*horas non numero*. The above record is solely due to the inception by our gracious hostess at Mezquitillas of a pretty custom, namely, that for every bullet fired, a small sum should be payable by the sportsman towards a local charity.

Del Poeta al arma no dieron
Las Musas mucha virtud :
Cuatro ciervos le salieron . . .
Y los cuatro se le fueron
Rebosantes de salud !

Suya fue la culpa toda :
Con la escopeta homicida
Á apuntar no se acomoda . . .
Si les dispara una oda
No escapa ni uno con vida !

Sin duda no plugo á Dios
Que del ganado cervuno
Fueran las Parcas en pos
Total ; tiros, treinta y dos
Yvenados muertos, uno ! ! !

¿ Quien realizó tal hazaña ?
Verguenza de humillacion,
Mi frente al decirlo baña.
Fue el Ingles . . . la rubia Albion
Quedó esta vez sobre España ! !
. . . . .
Resumen : luz, embeleso,
Panoramas, maravillas,
Bosques, arroyos, cantuéso . . .
Lo dice junto todo eso
Solo al decir "Mezquitillas."

Y bondad, afecto, agrado,
Gracia que ingenio revela,
Hospitalidad, cuidado . . .
Todo eso esta compendiado
Condecir "Juan y Carmela."

The next day's operations precisely reversed those of to-day, the guns being placed along the depths of a valley, while the beaters brought down the whole mountain-slopes above. Thus each post, though it commanded a "pass," gave no such wonderful view beyond as had been the feature of yesterday's *montería*. It will, in fact, be obvious that in a big mountain-land no two beats are ever alike nor the conditions equal. Every day presents fresh problems. That is one of the charms.

To-day, several stags and a pig were killed, besides one roe-deer and an enormous wild-cat that scaled $7\frac{3}{4}$ kilos (over 17 lbs.).

Towards noon, the sun-heat in the gorge being intense, I had

cautiously shifted my post to the banks of a mountain-burnlet that, embowered in oleanders,[1] gurgled hard by. In those glancing streams, while I sat motionless, a pair of water-shrews were also busied with their lunch—dipping and diving, turning over pebbles, and searching each nook and cranny of the crystal pool. Lovely little creatures they were—velvety black with

GRIFFON VULTURE

snow-white undersides, which showed conspicuously on either flank; but the curious feature was the silver sheen caused by infinite air-bubbles that still adhered to the fur while they swam beneath the surface. They recalled a similar scene in an elk-forest of distant Norway; but never in Spanish sierras have

[1] The oleander is poisonous to horses and other domestic animals, and is instinctively avoided by both game and cattle. During the Peninsular War it is recorded that several British soldiers came by their deaths through this cause. A foraging party cut and peeled some oleander branches to use as skewers in roasting meat over the camp-fires. Of twelve men who ate the meat, seven died.

Roaring—(September).

"Habet."

we noticed water-shrews except on this occasion. While yet watching the water-fairies, another movement caught the corner of one eye; with slow sedate steps, a grey wild-cat was descending the opposite slope. She saw nothing, yet the foresight of the ·303 carbine was recusant, it declined to get down into the nick, and a miss resulted. But what a bound the feline gave as an expanding bullet (at 2000 feet a second velocity) shattered the sierra half an inch above her back!

An incident occurred near this point (though in another year) with a stag. Two shots had been fired on the left, when the slightest sound behind and above inspired a prepared glance in that direction—and only just in time, for three seconds later a glorious pair of antlers showed up on the nearest bush-clad height, and the easiest of shots yielded a 35-inch trophy.

The annexed drawing shows a 14-pointer, which was killed here the following year by our host, Sr. Don Juan Calvo de León of Mezquitillas. In mere inches the measurements may be surpassed by others, but no head that we have seen excels this in extraordinary boldness of curve and symmetry of form. This stag was shot on the Puntales del Peco, January 17, 1908, and in the same beat Sr. Juan Calvo, Junr., secured another fine 14-pointer, as below:—

	Points.	Length.	Widest Tips.	Widest Inside.	Circ. above Bez.
No. 1 . .	14	38¾″	39¼″	33¼″	6¼″
No. 2 . .	14	36¼″	...	25¾″	...

Less rosy on that occasion was the writer's own luck. My post in Los Puntales was in a narrow neck or "pass" in the knife-edged ridge of a mountain-spur, the rock-strewn ground, overgrown with cistus shoulder-high, falling sharply away both before and behind. In front I looked into a chasm probably 1500 feet in depth, the hither slope being invisible, so sharp was

the drop; the opposite side, however (probably 2000 feet high), lay spread out as it were a perpendicular map. From leagues away beyond its apex the beaters were now approaching. From early in the day great fleecy cloud-masses had rolled by, and these

PICKING HIS WAY UP A ROCK STAIRCASE

(A 40-inch head.)

gradually grew denser till the whole sierra was enveloped in viewless fog. Hark! some animal is escalading my fortress; one cannot see fifteen yards—tantalizing indeed. Yet so well has the *puesto* been chosen that presently the intruder gallops almost over my toes—a yearling pig or *lechon*, not worth a bullet.

Later, during a clearer interval, I descried a stag picking a slow and deliberate course down the opposite escarpment. In the abyss below he was long lost to sight but presently reappeared, coming fairly straight in. Seldom have I felt greater

confidence in the alignment than when I then fired. Yet the result was a clean miss. While pressing trigger, another shot rang out half-a-mile beyond and the stag swerved sharply ; still I had another barrel, and the second bullet "told" loudly enough as the hart bounced, full-broadside, over the pass. Then he swerved to take the rising ground beyond and, crossing the skyline, displayed the grandest pair of antlers I have seen alive—

the great yard-long horns with their branching tops seemed too big even for that massive body.

On examination blood was found at once, and on both sides —that is, the bullet had passed right through.

In the fog I had under-estimated the distance and the hit was low and too far back. With two trackers I followed the spoor while daylight served and through places that any words of mine must fail to describe; but from the first the head-keeper had foretold the result: "Eso no se cobra—va lejos"—"that stag you will not recover; he goes far, but wherever he stops, he dies. See here! the dogs have run his spoor all along, but have not yet brought him to bay."

The indications left by the stag on brushwood and rock conveyed to the trackers' practised eyes, as clear as words, the precise position of the wound; and, as foretold, those coveted antlers were lost, to perish uselessly.

The pack of Mezquitillas was on this occasion reinforced by those of the Duke of Medinaceli and of the Marquis of Viana—bringing the total up to seventy hounds. Thus, in Spain, do the Grandees of a big land, when guests at a *montería*, bring with them their huntsmen, kennelmen, and their packs of hounds—a system that breathes a comforting sense of space.

Next day being hopelessly wet, I took opportunity of measuring three of the trophies which adorn the hall at Mezquitillas:—

	Points.	Length.	Widest Tips.	Circ. above Bez.	Circ. below Corona.
A . . .	15	38¼″	38¾″	6½″	...
B . . .	14	38″	29½″	6¼″	7½″
C . . .	14	37¾″	33½″	...	...
Roebuck .	...	8½″	3¼″		

It will be observed that the stag shot a day or two before, and illustrated above (p. 167), tops the best of these by half an inch. The somewhat abnormal curve, however, partly explains this.

We must record yet one more memorable day on this estate of Mezquitillas. This *montería* (in January 1910) covered the region known as the Leoncillo. Upwards of twenty big stags

JULY.

passed the firing-line, and every gun enjoyed his chance—several more than one. In the result, six stags were killed—three by our host, one by his son. Though carrying 12, 11, 10, and 10 points respectively, none of these four were of exceptional merit, and the best, a 14-pointer, fell to the Duke of Medinaceli.

The clean weight of these, the largest stags, is usually between $11\frac{1}{2}$ and 12 arrobas, or 287 to 300 lbs. English. One exceptionally heavy stag killed by our host's son, Juan Calvo, Junr., and which had received some injury in the *testes*, resulting in a malformation of the horn, weighed no less than $16\frac{1}{2}$ arrobas, or 412 lbs. English.

Full-grown wild-boars at Mezquitillas average about 7 arrobas, or 175 lbs., clean—one specially big boar reached 8 arrobas, or 200 lbs. Wolves, though abundant, are but rarely shot in *monterías* for the reasons already given. During the period covered by these notes only two were killed in *monterías*—one by Sr. Calvo, Junr., the other by Colonel Barrera. Wild-pigs breed as a rule in March, and to some extent *gregatim*, or in little colonies, which is supposed to be as a protection against the wolves; the lair (*camà*) being a regular nest made among thick scrub, and roofed over by the foliage. Lynxes, like wolves, are rarely seen. This year, four (a female, with three full-grown cubs) were held-up by the dogs, and all killed in one thicket.

Mongoose and genets are numerous on these brush-clad hills, and martens (*Mustela foina*) breed in the crags.

Stags roar from mid-September, chiefly by night. Their summer coat is darker rather than redder than that of winter.

Farther east in Moréna, near Fuen-Caliente, already mentioned, very fine heads are also obtained. The same systems prevail, and the following measurements have been given us by the Marquéz del Mérito, taken from two stags shot at Risquillo in his forests of the Sierra Quintána, season 1906-7.

	Length.	Widest Inside.	Circ. at Burr.	Circ. above Bez.	Brow-Antler.
No. 1 . .	$36\frac{3}{4}$″	35″	$8\frac{3}{4}$″	$5\frac{1}{2}$″	12″
No. 2 . .	$40\frac{1}{4}$″	...	$8\frac{3}{4}$″	6″	12″

No. 1 carried $7+7=14$ points, and weighed 224 lbs. clean.
No. 2 carried $8+7=15$ points, besides several knobs.

Both are shown in photos annexed.

In the extreme east of the Sierra Morena another culminating point of excellence appears to be attained at Valdelagrana and Zamujar in the neighbourhood of Jaen—at least it is from that region that two of the largest examples came that we have yet seen in Spain. Both the magnificent heads below described were carefully measured by ourselves :—

	Points.	Length.	Widest Tips.	Widest Inside.	Circ. at Base.	Circ. above Bez.	Circ. below Corona.
No. 1 . .	16	$40\frac{5}{8}$″	$40\frac{1}{2}$″	$31\frac{1}{2}$″	$7\frac{1}{2}$″	$5\frac{5}{8}$″	$7\frac{1}{4}$″
No. 2 . .	16	$38\frac{3}{4}$″	$33\frac{1}{2}$″	$28\frac{1}{2}$″	…	$5\frac{3}{4}$″	$7\frac{1}{8}$″

No. 1 was shot at Valdelagrana, Jaen, by Sr. D. Enrique Parladé, has five on each top, all strong points, brow-antler $14\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Both horns precisely equal, $40\frac{5}{8}$ inches.

No. 2 shot at El Zamujar, Jaen, by the Marquéz de Alvéntos, the whole head massive and rugged, and all the sixteen points well developed.

The only Spanish stag within our knowledge which exceeds these dimensions was shot at Ballasteros in the Montes de Toledo by Sr. D. I. L. de Ybarra, the measurements of which, though not taken by ourselves, we accept without reserve as follows :—Length, 41 inches; breadth, $36\frac{1}{2}$ inches; circumference below corona, $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches. (See photo.)

Since writing the foregoing, a head much exceeding the above records has been obtained at Lugar Nuevo, near Andujar, in the eastern sierra, and which measures no less than 43 inches. Photographs, with measurements taken by Messrs. Rowland Ward (both of this and another good head secured at Fontanarejo), have been sent us by the fortune-favoured sportsman, Mr. J. M. Power of Linares, and will be found subjoined. For convenience of reference we put the whole record in tabular form.

[Table

Risquillo.
Points 15, plus knobs. Length 40¼ in.

Marmolejos.
A Twenty-four Pointer.

Fontanarejo.
Points 16. Length 32½ in.

Montes de Toledo.
Points 14. Length 41.

RED DEER HEADS, SIERRA MORÉNA.

RECORD OF RED DEER HEADS—SIERRA MORÉNA

	Length outside Curve.	Widest.		Circumference above Bez.	Points.	Locality.
		Tips.	Inside.			
	in.	in.	in.	in.		
J. M. Power	43	35	$33\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{1}{2}$	6+6	Lugar Nuevo.
I. L. de Ybarra	41	$36\frac{1}{2}$	...	...	...	Ballasteros, Montes de Toledo.
E. Parladé	$40\frac{5}{8}$	$40\frac{1}{2}$	$31\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{5}{8}$	8+8	Valdelagrana.
Marq. Mérito	$40\frac{1}{4}$	...	...	6	7+7	Risquillos.
Authors	40	$36\frac{1}{3}$	32	$5\frac{1}{4}$	9+8	(*Wild Spain.*)
Marq. Alvéntos	$38\frac{3}{4}$	$33\frac{1}{3}$	$28\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{3}{4}$	8+8	Zamujar, Jäen.
J. Calvo de León	$38\frac{3}{4}$	$39\frac{1}{3}$	$33\frac{1}{4}$	$6\frac{1}{4}$	7+7	Mezquitillas.
Do.	$38\frac{1}{4}$	$38\frac{3}{4}$	...	$6\frac{1}{2}$	8+7	Do.
Do.	38	$29\frac{1}{2}$	...	$6\frac{1}{4}$	7+7	Do.
Do.	38	$33\frac{1}{2}$	...	...	7+7	Do.
Authors	$37\frac{1}{2}$	$34\frac{1}{2}$	$29\frac{1}{4}$	5	8+7	(*Wild Spain.*)
Marq. Mérito	$36\frac{3}{4}$	...	35	$5\frac{1}{2}$	8+7	Risquillos.
J. Calvo, hijo	$36\frac{1}{4}$	...	$25\frac{3}{4}$	...	7+7	Mezquitillas.
Authors	35	$32\frac{1}{4}$	28	$5\frac{3}{4}$	6+6	Do.
Do.	$34\frac{1}{8}$	(cast antler)		$5\frac{3}{4}$	8+0	Sa. Quintána.
J. M. Power	$32\frac{1}{2}$	...	...	$5\frac{1}{2}$	8+8	Fontanarejo.

CHAPTER XVI

PERNÁLES

A COUNTRY better adapted by nature for the success of the enterprising bandit cannot be conceived. The vast *despoblados* = uninhabited wastes, with scant villages far isolated and lonely mountain-tracts where a single desperado commands the way and can hold-up a score of passers-by, all lend themselves admirably to this peculiar form of industry. And up to quite recent years these natural advantages were exploited to the full. Riding through the sierras, one notes rude crosses and epitaphs inscribed on rocks recording the death of this or that wayfarer. Now travellers, as a rule, do not die natural deaths by the wayside; and an inspection of these silent memorials indicates that each occupies a site eminently adapted for a quiet murder. Fortunately, during the last year or two, the extension of the telegraph and linking-up of remote hamlets has aided authority practically to extinguish brigandage on the grander scale. Spain to-day can no longer claim a single artist of the Jack Sheppard or Dick Turpin type; not one heroic murderer such as José Maria (whose safe-conduct was more effective than that of his king), Vizco el Borje, Agua-Dulce, and other *ladrones en grande* whose life-histories will be found outlined in *Wild Spain*.

The two first-named represent a type of manhood one cannot but admire—admire despite oneself and despite its inconvenience to civilisation. These were men ignorant of fear, who, though themselves gentle, were yet able, by sheer force of iron will, to command and control cut-throat gangs which set authority at defiance, and who subjected whole districts to their anarchical aims and orders. The outlaw-overlords ever acted on similar lines. Respecting human life as, in itself, valueless, they commandeered real value by an adroit combination of liberally subsidising the peasantry while yet terrorising all by the certainty of swift and

merciless retribution should the least shade of treachery befall —or rather what to the brigand-crew represented treachery. Human life was otherwise safe. Two points in this connection demand mention. Besides direct robberies, the brigands battened upon a tribute exacted from landowners and paid as a ransom to shield themselves and their tenants from molestation. Secondly, their safety and continued immunity from capture was largely due to that secret influence—quite undefinable, yet potent to this day—known as "Caciquismo." That influence was exerted on behalf of the outlaws as part of the ransom arrangement aforesaid.

Neither for robber-chieftains of the first water, such as these, nor for brigandage as a scientific business, is there any longer opportunity in modern Spain, any more than for a Robin Hood at home. Lesser lights of the road, footpads and casual *sequestradores*, will survive for a further space in the wilder region; but the real romance of the industry ceased with the new century.

PERNALES

Its first decade has nevertheless produced a brace of first-rate ruffians who, though in no sense to be compared with the old-time aristocracy of the craft, at least succeeded in setting at naught the civil power, and in pillaging and harassing rural Andalucia during more than two years.

The original pair were known as Pernáles and El Vivillo, the latter a man of superior instincts and education, who, under former conditions, would doubtless have developed into the noble bandit. Vivillo on principle avoided bloodshed; not a single assassination is laid to his charge during a long career of crime. Pernales, on the contrary, revelled in revolting cruelties, and rated human life no higher than that of a rabbit. At first this repulsive ruffian, as hateful of aspect as of character,[1] acted as

[1] Pernales was born at Estepa, province of Sevilla, September 3, 1878, a ne'er-do-weel son of honest, rural parents. By 1906 he had become notorious as a determined criminal. His appearance and Machiavellian instincts were interpreted as indicating great personal courage, and, united with his physique, combined to present a repulsive and menacing figure. A huge head set on broad chest and shoulders, with red hair and deep-set blue eyes, a livid freckled complexion, thin eyebrows, and one long tusk always visible, protruding from a horrid mouth, made up a sufficiently characteristic ensemble.

a sort of lieutenant to Vivillo, but the partnership was soon renounced by the latter consequent on a cowardly crime perpetrated by Pernales in the Sierra of Algamita. At a lonely farm lived an elderly couple, the husband an industrious, thrifty man, who had the reputation of being rich among his fellows. Their worldly possessions in actual fact consisted of some 2000 reales = £20. Pernales was not likely to overlook a hoard so ill-protected, and one night in November 1906 insisted, at the muzzle of his gun, on the savings being handed over to him. A lad of fourteen, however, had witnessed the transaction, and on perceiving him (and fearing he might thus be denounced) Pernales plunged his knife in the boy's breast, killing him on the spot. Vivillo, on hearing of this insensate murder by his second, insisted on the restitution of their money to the aged pair, expelled Pernales from his gang, and threatened him with death should he dare again to cross his path.

Pernales now formed a fresh partnership with a desperado of similar calibre to himself, a soulless brute, known as the Niño de Arahál, whose acquaintance he had made at a village of that name. This pair, along with a gang of ruffians who acclaimed them as chiefs, were destined to achieve some of the worst deeds of violence in the whole annals of Spanish *Bandolerismo*. For two years they held half Andalucia in awe, terrorised by the ferocity of their methods and merciless disregard of life. None dared denounce them or impart to authority a word of information as to their whereabouts, even though it were known for certain —such was the dread of vengeance.

Innumerable were the skirmishes between the forces of the law and its outragers. An illustrative incident occurred in March 1907. A pair of Civil Guards, riding up the Rio de los Almendros, district of Pruna, suddenly and by mere chance found themselves face to face with the men they "wanted." A challenge to halt and surrender was answered by instant fire, and the outlaws, wheeling about, clapped spurs to their horses and fled. Now for the Civil Guards as brave men and dutiful we have the utmost respect; but their marksmanship on this occasion proved utterly rotten, and an easy right-and-left was clean missed twice and thrice over! The fugitives, moreover, outrode pursuit, and the fact illustrates their cool, calculating nonchalance, that so soon as they reckoned on having gained a forty-five minutes'

advantage, the pair paid a quiet social call on a well-to-do farmer of Morón, enjoyed a glass of wine with their trembling host, and then (having some fifteen minutes in hand) rode forward. Now comes a point. On arrival of the pursuers, that farmer (though not a word had been said) denied all knowledge of his new-gone guests. Pursuit was abandoned.

For eight days the bandits lay low. Then Pernales presented himself at a farm in Ecija with a demand for £40, or in default the destruction of the live-stock. The bailiff (no farmer lives on his farm) despatched a messenger on his fleetest horse to bring in the ransom. As by the stipulated hour he had not returned, Pernales shot eight valuable mules! Riding thence to La Coronela, a farm belonging to Antonio Fuentes, the bull-fighter, a similar message was despatched. Pending its reply our outlaws feasted on the best; but instead of bank-notes, a force of Civil Guards appeared on the scene. That made no difference. The terrified farm-hands swore that the bandits had ridden off in a given direction, and while the misled police hurried away on a wild-goose chase, our heroes finished their feast, and late at night (having loaded up everything portable of value) departed for their lair in the sierra.

During the next two months (May and June 1907) only minor outrages and robberies were committed, but that quiescence was enlivened by two feats that set out in relief the coolness and unflinching courage of these desperados. In May they moved to the neighbourhood of Córdoba, and among other raids pulled off a good haul in bank-notes, cash, and other valuables at Lucena, an estate of D. Antonio Moscoso, following this up by a report in their "Inspired Press" that the brigands had at last fled northwards with the view of embarking for abroad at Santander! A few days later, however (May 31), they had the effrontery to appear in Córdoba itself at the opening of the Fair, but, being early recognised, promptly rode off into the impending Sierra Moréna. On their heels followed the Civil Guard. Finding themselves overtaken, our friends faced round and opened fire, but the result was a defeat of the bandit gang. One, "El Niño de la Gloria," fell dead pierced by three bullets; two other scoundrels—Reverte and Pepino—were captured wounded, while in the mêlée the robbers abandoned four horses, a rifle, and a quantity of jewelry—the product of recent raids. Pernales himself and the

rest of his crew escaped, and found shelter in the fastnesses of the Sierra Moréna—thence returning to their favourite hunting-grounds nearer Seville.

Riding along the bye-ways of Marchena, disguised as rustic travellers, on June 2 they demanded at a remote farm a night's food and lodging. Half-concealed knives and revolvers proved strong arguments in favour of obedience, and, despite suspicion and dislike, the bailiff acceded. This time the Civil Guard were on the track. At midnight they silently surrounded the house, communicated with the watchful bailiff, and ordered all doors to be locked. The turning of a heavy key, however, reached Pernales' ear. In a moment the miscreants were on the alert. While one saddled-up the horses, the other unloosed a young farm mule, boldly led him across the courtyard to the one open doorway, and, administering some hearty lashes to the animal's ribs, set him off in full gallop into the outer darkness. The police, seeing what they concluded was an attempted escape, first opened fire, then started helter-skelter in pursuit of a riderless mule! The robbers meanwhile rode away at leisure.

Five days later, on June 7, both bandits attacked a *venta*, or country inn, near Los Santos, in Villafranca de los Barrios, carrying off £200 in cash, six mules, with other valuables, and leaving the owner for dead. This particular crime, for some reason or other, was more noised abroad than dozens of others equally atrocious, and orders were now issued jointly both by the *Ministro de Gobernacion*, the Captain-General of the district, and the Colonels commanding the Civil Guard throughout the whole of the harassed regions, that at all hazards the murderous pair must be taken at once, dead or alive. This peremptory mandate evolved unusual activities; the whole of the western sierra was reported blockaded. Pernales, nevertheless, receiving warning through innumerable spies of the police plans, succeeded in escaping from the province of Seville into that of Córdoba, where the pair pursued their career of crime, though now under conditions of increased hazard and difficulty. Sometimes for days together they lay low or contented themselves with petty felonies.

Then suddenly in a new district—that of Puente-Genil—burst out a fresh series of the most audacious outrages. Big sums of money, with alternative of instant death, were extorted

from farmers and landowners. These exploits, together with an odd murder or two, spread consternation throughout the new area, and in all Puente-Genil, Pernales and the Niño de Arahal became a standing nightmare. So soon as checked here by the police, the robbers once more moved west, again "inspiring" the press with reports of a foreign destination—this time *viâ* Cádiz. A few days later, Málaga was named as their intended exit. Yet on July 16 they were to the north of Seville, and had another rifle-duel with the Guards, again escaping scatheless at a gallop.

Persecution was now so keen that the wilds of the Sierra Moréna afforded their only possible hope, and by holding the highest passes the outlaws reached this refuge, being next reported at Venta de Cardeñas, 160 miles north of Córdoba. A cordon of police was now drawn along the whole fringe of the sierra from Vizeo del Marquéz to Despeñaperros. The position of the hunted couple became daily more precarious, their scope of activity more restricted, and robberies reduced to insignificant proportions. Nevertheless, on July 22, with consummate audacity and dash, they raided the farm of Recena belonging to D. Tomas Herrera, carrying off a sum of £160, with which they remained content till August 18, when they attacked the two farms of Vencesla and Los Villares, but, being repulsed, fled northwards towards Ciudad Real. On September 1 they entered the province of La Mancha, apparently seeking shelter in the deep defiles of the Sierra de Alcaráz, for that morning a Manchegan woodcutter was accosted by two mounted wayfarers who inquired the best track to Alcaráz. The woodman innocently gave directions which, if exactly followed, would much shorten the route. While thanking his informant, Pernales—apparently out of sheer bravado—revealed his identity, introducing himself to the astonished woodcutter as the Fury who was keeping all authority on the jump and the country-side ablaze. Straightway the man of the axe made for the nearest guard-station, and a captain with six mounted police, reinforced by peasants, followed the trail. As dusk fell the pursuers perceived two horses tethered in a densely wooded dell, while hard by their owners sat eating and drinking—the latter imprudence perhaps explaining why the brigands were at last caught napping. To the challenge "Alto á la Guardia Civil!" came the usual prompt response — the

vibrant whistle of rifle-balls. Pernales managed to empty the magazine of his repeater, killing one guard outright and wounding two more. Though himself hit, he yet stood erect, and was busy recharging his weapon when further shots brought him to earth. On seeing his chief go down the Niño de Arahal sprang to the saddle, but the opposing rifles were this time too many and too near. The bandit, fatally wounded, was pitched to earth in death-throes, while the poor beast stumbled and fell in its stride a few paces beyond. An examination of the bodies showed that Pernales had been pierced by twenty-two balls, his companion by ten.

Caciquismo

Doubtless the thought may have occurred to readers that some interpretation is necessary to explain how such events as these (extending over a series of years) are still possible in Spain—in a country fully equipped not only with elaborate legal codes bristling with stringent penalties both for crime and its abettors, but also with magistrates, judges, telegraphs, and an ample armed force, competent, loyal, and keen to enforce those laws. Without assistants and accomplices (call their aiders and abettors what you will) the Pernales and Vivillos of to-day could not survive for a week. The explanation lies in the existence of that inexplicable and apparently ineradicable power called Caciquismo—fortunately, we believe, on the decline, but still a force sufficient to paralyse the arm of the law and arrest the exercise of justice. Ranging from the lowest rungs of society, Caciquismo penetrates to the main-springs of political power. A secret understanding with combined action amongst the affiliated, it secures protection even to criminals with their hidden accomplices, provided that each and all yield blind obedience to their ruling Cacique, social and political. The Cacique stands above law; he is a law unto himself; he does or leaves undone, pays or leaves unpaid as may suit his convenience—conscience he has none. At his own sweet will he will charge personal expenses—say his gamekeepers' wages or the cost of a private roadway—to the neighbouring municipality. None dare object. Caciquismo is no fault of the Spanish people; it is the disgrace of the Caciques, who, as men of education, should be ashamed of mean and underhand practices that recall, on a petty scale, those of the Tyrants of Syracuse.

Should any of these sleek-faces read our book, they may be gratified to learn that no other civilised country produces parasites such as they.

Not a foreign student of the problems of social life in Spain with its conditions but has been brought to a full stop in the effort to diagnose or describe the secret sinister influence of Caciquismo. Our Spanish friends—detesting and despising the thing equally with ourselves—tell us that no foreigner has yet realised either its nature or its scope. Certainly we make no such pretension, nor attempt to describe the thing itself—a thing scarce intelligible to Saxon lines of thought, a baneful influence devised to retard the advance of modern ideas of freedom and justice, to benumb all moral yearnings for truth and honesty in public affairs and civil government. Caciquismo may roughly be defined as the negation and antithesis of patriotism; it sets the personal influence of one before the interest of all, sacrificing whole districts to the caprice of some soul-warped tyrant with no eyes to see.

A word in conclusion on Vivillo. Neither ignorance nor necessity impelled Joaquin Camargo, nicknamed El Vivillo (the Lively One), to embark, at the age of twenty-five, on a career of crime. Rather it was that spirit of knight-errantry, of reckless adventure, that centuries before had swept the Spanish Main, and that nowadays, in baser sort, thrives and is fostered by a false romance—as Diego Corrientes, the bandit, was reputed to be "run" by a duchess, as the "Seven Lads of Ecija" terrorised under the ægis of exalted patronage, and José Maria, the murderer of the Sierra Moréna, was extolled as a melodramatic hero by novelists all over Spain. On such lines young Camargo thought to gather fresh glories for himself. He early gained notoriety by a smart exploit in holding-up the diligence from Las Cabezas for Villa Martin just when the September Fair was proceeding at the latter place. The passengers, mostly cattle-dealers, were relieved of bursting purses—no cheques pass current at Villa Martin—to the tune of £8000. After that, for several years, Vivillo ruled rural Andalucia, and his desperate deeds supplied the papers with startling head-lines. When pursuit became troublesome he embarked for Argentina, and soon his name was forgotten. His retreat, however, was discovered,

and Vivillo was brought back, landing at Cádiz February 19. 1908. Since that date he has lived in Seville prison—a man of high intelligence, of reputed wealth, and the father of two pretty daughters. For reasons unexplained (and into which we do not inquire) his trial never comes on. Vivillo keeps a stiff lip and enjoys . . . nearly all he wants.

A SUMMER EVENING—SPARROW-OWLS (*Athene noctua*) AND MOTHS

CHAPTER XVII

LA MANCHA

THE LAGOONS OF DAIMIEL

IMMEDIATELY to the north of our "Home-Province" of Andalucia, but separated therefrom by the Sierra Moréna, stretch away the uplands of La Mancha—the country of Don Quixote. The north-bound traveller, ascending through the rock-gorges of Despeñaperros, thereat quits the mountains and enters on the Manchegan plateau. A more dreary waste, ugly and desolate, can scarce be imagined. Were testimony wanting to the compelling genius of Cervantes, in very truth La Mancha itself would yield it.

Yet it is wrong to describe La Mancha as barren. Rather its central highlands present a monotony of endless uninteresting cultivation. League-long furrows traverse the landscape, running in parallel lines to utmost horizon, or weary the eye by radiating from the focal point as spokes in a wheel. But never a break or a bush relieves one's sight, never a hedge or a hill, not a pool, stream, or tree in a long day's journey. Oh, it is distressing, wherever seen—in Old World or New—that everlasting cultivation on the flat. True, it produces the necessary fruits of the earth—here (to wit) corn and wine.

Farther north, where the Toledan mountains loom blue over the western horizon, La Mancha refuses to produce anything.

The unsympathetic earth, for 100 miles a sterile hungry crust, stony and sun-scorched, obtrudes an almost hideous nakedness, its dry bones declining to be clad, save in flints or fragments of lava and splintered granite. Wherever nature is a trifle less austere, a low growth of dwarf broom and helianthemum at least serves to vary the dreariness of dry prairie-grass. There, beneath the foothills of the wild Montes de Toledo, stretch whole regions where thorn-scrub and broken belts of open wood vividly recall the scenery of equatorial Africa—we might be traversing the "Athi Plains" instead of European

WOODCHAT SHRIKE AND ITS "SHAMBLES"
(Sketched in La Mancha)

lands. Evergreen oak and wild-olive replace mimosa and thorny acacia—one almost expects to see the towering heads of giraffes projecting above the grey-green bush. In both cases there is driven home that living sense of arid sterility, the same sense of desolation—nay, here even more so—since there is lacking that wondrous wild fauna of the other. No troops of graceful gazelles bound aside before one's approach; no herds of zebra or antelope adorn the farther veld; no galloping files of shaggy gnus spurn the plain. A chance covey of redlegs, a hoopoe or two, the desert-loving wheatears—birds whose presence ever attests sterility—a company of azure-winged magpies chattering among the stunted ilex, or a woodchat—that is all one may see in a long day's ride.

Another feature common to both lands—and one abhorrent to northern eye—is the absence of water, stagnant or current.

Never the glint of lake or lagoon, far less the joyous murmur of rippling burn, rejoice eye or ear in La Mancha.

Alas, that to us is denied the synthetic sense! In vain we scan Manchegan thicket for compensating beauties, for the Naiads and Dryads with which Cervantes' creative spirit peopled the wilderness; no vision of lovely Dorotheas laving ivory limbs of exquisite mould in sylvan fountain rewards our searching (but too prosaic) gaze—that may perhaps be explained by the contemporary absence of any such fountains. Nor have other lost or love-lorn maidens, Lucindas or Altisidoras from enchanted castle, aided us to add one element of romance to purely faunal studies. Castles, it is true, adorn the heights or crown a distant skyline; nor are Dulcineas of Toboso extinct or even infrequent. Of precisely her type was our handmaiden in the *posada* at Daimiel, while excellent specimens graced the twilight *paséo* of Ciudad Real or reclined beneath the orange-groves of its *alameda*.

DESERT-LOVING WHEATEARS

We have animadverted upon the absence of water in La Mancha. Yet there is no rule but has its exception, and it is, in fact, to the existence of a series of most singular Manchegan lagoons, abounding in bird-life, that this venturesome literary excursion owes its genesis.

In the midst of tawny table-lands, well-nigh 200 miles from the sea and upwards of 2000 feet above its level, nestle the sequestered Lagunas de Daimiel extending to many miles of mere and marsh-land. These lakes are, in fact, the birthplace of the great river Guadiana, the head-waters being formed by the junction of its nascent streams with its lesser tributary the Ciguela.

In the confluence of the two rivers mentioned it is the Guadiana that chiefly lends its serpentine course to the formation of a vast series of lagoons, with islands and islets, cane-brakes and shallows overgrown by reeds, sedge, and marsh-plants, all traversed in every direction by open channels (called *trochas*), the whole constituting a complication so extensive that none save experienced boatmen can thread a way through its labyrinths.

Isolated thus, a mere speck of water in the midst of the arid table-lands of central Spain, yet these lagoons of Daimiel constitute not only one of the chief wildfowl resorts of Spain, but possibly of all Europe. Upon these waters there occur from time to time every species of aquatic game that is known in this Peninsula, while in autumn the duck-tribe in countless hosts congregate in nearly all their European varieties. Those which

RED-CRESTED POCHARD (*Fuligula rufila*)

are found in the greatest numbers include the mallard, pintail, shoveler, wigeon, gargany, common and marbled teal, ferruginous duck, tufted duck, pochard, and (in great abundance) the red-crested pochard or *Pato colorado*. Coots also frequent the lagoons, but in smaller numbers. There also appear at frequent intervals flamingoes and black geese (*Ganzos negros*), whose species we have not been able to identify, sand-grouse of both kinds, sea-gulls, duck-hawks, grebes, and occasionally some wandering cormorants. Herons and egrets in their different varieties haunt the shores and the shallows.

Lest any far-venturing fowler be induced by this chapter

to pack his 12-bore and seek the nearest Cook's office, it should at once be stated that the rights-of-chase (as are all worth having, alike in Spain, Scotland, or England) are in private hands—those of the Sociedad de las Lagunas de Daimiel, a society which at present numbers five members, all of ducal rank, and to one of whom we are indebted for excellent descriptive notes. The lakes are guarded by keepers who have held their posts for generations—the family of the Escudéros.

To claim for these far-inland lagoons a premier place among the great wildfowl resorts of Europe may seem extravagant—albeit confirmed by facts and figures that follow. But the lakes, be it remembered, are surrounded by that cultivation afore described—100-mile stubbles and so on. Another fact that well-nigh struck dumb the authors (long accustomed to study and preach the incredible mobility of bird-life) was that ducks shot at dawn at Daimiel are found to be cropful of *rice*. Now the nearest rice-grounds are at Valencia, distant 180 miles; hence these ducks, not as a migratory effort, but merely as incidental to each night's food-supply, have sped at least 360 miles between dusk and dawn.

As autumn approaches (we quote from notes kindly given us by the Duke of Arión), so soon as the keepers note the arrival of incoming migrants, their first business consists in observing the points which these select for their assemblage. Then with infinite patience, tact, and skill, the utmost advantage is seized of those earlier groups which have chosen haunts nearest to points where guns may be placed most effectively. These favoured groups are left rigorously alone to act as decoys, while by gentleness and least provocative methods, the keepers induce other bands which have settled in less appropriate positions to unite their forces with the elect. Thus within a few days vast multitudes, scattered over wide areas, have been unconsciously concentrated within that "sphere of influence" where four or five guns may act most efficaciously.

The supreme test of the keepers' efficiency is demonstrated when this concentration is limited to some particular area designated for a single day's shooting.

The night preceding the day fixed for shooting, so soon as the ducks have already quitted the lagoons and spread themselves afar over the surrounding cornlands on their accustomed nocturnal excursions in search of food, the posts of the various gunners are prepared. This work involves cutting a channel through some islanded patch of reeds situate in the centre of open water. The channel is merely wide enough to admit the entrance of the punt from which the gunner shoots,

the cut reeds being left to remask the opening so soon as the punt has entered.

Somewhere between three and four o'clock in the morning the sportsmen sally forth from the shooting-lodge (situate on the Isla de los Asnos), each in his punt directing a course to the position he has drawn by lot. In the boat, besides guns, cartridges, and loader (should one be taken), are carried thirty or forty decoy-ducks fashioned of wood or cork and painted to resemble in form and colour the various species of duck expected at that particular season.

Each of these decoys is furnished with a string and leaden weight to act as an anchor. A fixed plummet directly beneath the floating decoy prevents its being blown over or upset.

Generally speaking, the sportsman awaits the dawn in the same boat in which he has reached his position, but should shallow water prevent this, either a lighter punt, capable of being carried by hand, or some wooden boards are substituted as a seat. Having set out his decoys, and arranged his ammunition, each gunner awaits in glorious expectancy the moment when the first light of dawn shall set the aquatic world amove.

Singly they may come, or in bands and battalions—soon the whole arc of heaven is serried with moving masses. Should the day prove favourable, firing continues practically incessant till towards ten o'clock. From that hour onwards it slackens perceptibly, ducks flying fewer and fewer and at increasing intervals up to noon or thereby, when spoils are collected and the day's sport is over.

There are at most but four or five *puestos*, or gun-posts, at Daimiel, and that only when ducks are in their fullest numbers.

Under such conditions, and when all incidental conditions are favourable, a bag of over 1000 ducks in the day has not infrequently been registered. On such occasions it follows that individual guns must gather from 200 to 300 ducks apiece.

Almost incredible as are the results occasionally obtained under favouring conditions, yet the duck-shooting at Daimiel is nevertheless subject to considerable variation in accordance with the sequence of the season. The biggest totals are usually recorded during the months of September, October, and November in dry years. The bags secured at such periods are apt to run into extraordinary numbers, but with this proviso, that quality is then sometimes inferior to quantity. For the chief item at these earlier shoots consists of teal, with only a sprinkling of mallard, wigeon, and shoveler, and, in some years, a few coots. But at the later *tiradas* (shootings), although game is usually rather less abundant, it is then entirely composed of the bigger ducks—beyond all in numbers being the mallard, pintail, wigeon, and red-crested pochard, while an almost equal number of shovelers and common pochards are also bagged.

At these earlier *tiradas* a good gun should be able, with ease, to bring down, say, 400 ducks, although this number dwindles sadly in the pick-up, since but few of those birds will be recovered that fall outside the narrow space of open water around each "hide." One may say roughly that at least one-fourth are lost. For, although each post be surrounded by open water, yet many ducks must fall within the encircling canes, while even those that fall in the open, if winged and beyond the reach of a second barrel, will inevitably gain the shelter of the covert, and all these are irrecoverable. Others, again, carrying on a few yards, may fall dead in open water, but at a distance the precise position of which is difficult to fix by reason of intervening cane-brakes. Thus between those that are lost in the above ways and others that may be carried away by the wind or the current (besides many that are devoured by hawks and eagles under the fowler's eye but beyond the range of his piece) it is no exaggerated estimate that barely three-fourths of the fallen are ever recovered.

To the above description another Spanish friend, Don Isidoro Urzáiz, adds the following:—

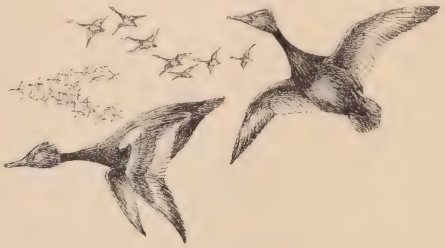
In the year 1892 I fired at ducks in a single morning at Daimiel one thousand and ten cartridges. This was between 6.30 and 10.30 A.M. I gathered rather over two hundred, losing upwards of a hundred more. I shot badly; it being my first experience with duck, I had not learnt to let them come well in, and often fired too soon.

In subsequent *tiradas* I have never enjoyed quite so much luck, although never firing less than 400 to 500 cartridges. In spite of the difficulty of recovering dead game, I have always on these occasions gathered from one hundred upwards—the precise numbers I have not recorded. Some of the *puestos* have a very small extent of open water around them, and in these a greater proportion of the game is necessarily lost. For example, in a single quite small clump of reeds I remember marking not less than thirty ducks fall dead, yet of these I recovered not one. The sharp-edged leaves of the sedge (*masiega*) cut like a knife, and the boatman who entered the reeds to collect the game returned a few minutes later without a bird, but with hands, arms, and legs bleeding from innumerable cuts and scratches, which obliged him to desist from further search. This is but one example of the difficulty of recovering fallen game.

As examples of the totals secured individually in a day may be quoted the following. At the first shooting in 1908 the Duke of Arión gathered 251 ducks, and at the second shoot, 245, the Duke of Prim, 197. The record bag was made some ten or twelve years ago by a Valencian sportsman, Don Juan Cistel,

who brought in no less than 393 ducks in one day! His late Majesty, King Alfonso XII., comes second with 381 ducks shot in three hours and a half. On his second visit, on hearing that he had secured his century, His Majesty stopped shooting, being more interested to watch the fowl passing overhead. His total was 127. King Alfonso XIII. had an unlucky day here—rain and storm—hence he only totalled ninety odd. Many years ago, our late friend, Santiago Udaeta, was credited with 270 ducks to his own gun in one day.

These bags are truly enormous, for, big as it is, Daimiel is not a patch in size as compared with our own marismas of the



RED-CRESTED POCHARD—AN IMPRESSION AT DAIMIEL

Guadalquivir. There is here, on the other hand, abundant cover to conceal the guns, which is not the case with us.

It was at Daimiel that we first made acquaintance with the red-crested pochard—a handsome and truly striking species, smart in build, colour, action, and every attribute. A bushy red head outstretched on a very long neck contrasts with the jet-black breast, while the white "speculum" on the wings shows up conspicuous as a transparency, especially when a band passes overhead in the azure vault, or splashes down on reed-girt shallow—one actually seems to see through the gauzy texture of their quills. These ducks breed in numbers at Daimiel, as do also mallards, garganey, and ferruginous ducks, together with stilts, grebes, and herons of all denominations. Greatly do we regret that our experience at Daimiel does not include the spring-season with all its unknown ornithological possibilities. An unfortunate

accident prevented our spending a week or two at Daimiel in May of the present year.

Ospreys visit the lakes in autumn, preying on the abundant carp and tench ; and wild-boars, some of great size, coming from the bush-clad Sierra de Villarubia on the south, frequent the cane-brakes. Shelducks of either species appear unknown ; but grey geese (as well as flamingoes) make passing calls at intervals, a small dark-coloured goose (possibly the bernicle) is recorded to have been shot on two or three occasions, and wild swans once.

The little country-town of Daimiel, situate six or eight miles from the lakes, was recently the scene of an extraordinary tragedy. We copy the account from the Madrid newspaper, *El Liberal*, February 20, 1908 :—

> Telegraphing from Daimiel, it is announced that yesterday a gang of masked men forced their entrance into the Council-Chamber while the Council were holding a meeting under the presidency of the Mayor.
>
> The masked men, who numbered six or eight, came fully armed with guns and rifles which they discharged in the very face of the Mayor, who fell dead, riddled with bullets.
>
> The assembled Councillors, seized with panic, fled.
>
> The murdered Mayor was a Conservative, and the only member of that party who held a seat in the Corporation. It is believed that the assassination was perpetrated in obedience to political motives.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHT

ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps no other contemporary spectacle has been oftener and more minutely described by writers who—censors and enthusiasts alike—possess neither personal nor technical qualification, for the work. Impressions, once the Pyrenees are passed, grow spontaneously deeper and stronger in inverse ratio with experiences. And the majority of descriptions confessedly prejudge the scene in adverse sense—the writer (sometimes a lady) going into wild hysterics after half-seeing a single bull killed.

We have not the slightest intention of entering that arena of ravelled preconceptions and misconceptions, nor are we concerned either to uphold or to condemn. A greater mind has satirised the human tendency to "condone the sins we are inclined to, by damning those we have no mind to," and we are content to leave it at that.

In this chapter we purpose to glance at the subject from three points of view.

(1) The origin of bull-fighting, 500 years ago, and its subsequent development.

(2) The modern system of breeding and training the fighting bull.

(3) The "Miura question"—an incident of to-day.

As a Spanish institution, bull-fighting dates back to the Reconquest or shortly thereafter. When that abounding vigour and virility that had animated and sustained Spanish explorers and warriors—the sailors and adventurers who, following in the wake of the caravels of Columbus, opened up a new world to Spain and carried the purple banner of Castile to the ends of the earth—when that vigour had spent its fiery force and grown

anæmic, there still remained (as always) a residue of bold spirits who, scorning decadent circumstance, turned intuitively to that virile and dangerous exercise left them as a heritage by the vanished Moors.

For it was the Arab conquerors, the so-called Moors, who first practised this form of vicarious warfare. It was, however, in no sense as a sport—far less as a popular pastime—that the fierce Arab had risked equal chances with the fiercest wild beast of the Spanish plain. No, it was strictly as a substitute and a preparation for the sterner realities of war that, during the intervals of peace, the Moors "kept their hands in" by fighting bulls.

The object was to keep themselves and their chargers fit, their eyesight true, and muscles toughened for the further struggles that all knew must follow. But during those intervals of peace, the rival knights, Christian and Moslem, met in keen competition with lance and sword on the enclosed arena of the bull-ring. The conclusion of a truce was frequently celebrated by holding a joint *fiesta de toros.*

No trace, however, exists in Arab writings to show that these people possessed any innate love of bull-fighting as a sport, or ever practised it save only as an accessory to the art of war.

No other people of ancient race have had exhibitions of this kind—that is, where the skill of man was invoked to incite a beast to attack in certain desired modes; while the performer escaped the onset, and finally slew his adversary, by preconceived forms of defence governed by set rules—a spectacle wherein the assembled crowd could, each according to his light, estimate both the skill of the man and the fighting quality of the beast. That the blood of many a gladiator dyed the Roman arena at the horns of bulls is certain: but no artistic embellishments of attack or defence added to the joy of the Roman holiday. The mere mechanical instinct of self-preservation may inadvertently have suggested to individual combatants certain combinations in the conflict that in later days have been utilised by modern matadors; but it seems hardly possible to suppose that Roman gladiators saved themselves by methods of prescribed art. Contemporary records, together with the scenes depicted on coinage, represent rather a mere massacre of men by brute force; and such cannot bear any relation to the conditions that govern the national *fiesta* of Spain to-day.

The actual origin in Spain of the *Corrida de Toros* must thus be traced to the Spanish Arabs, who, to exercise themselves and their steeds during intermittent periods of peace, adopted this dangerous pastime with the view of fortifying and invigorating personal valour, so necessary in times of constant strife.

The Arab's spear and charger were opposed to the wild bull of the Spanish plain under conditions many of which are analogous to these in vogue to-day.

In those earlier ages it was permitted to an unhorsed cavalier to accept protection from the horns of his enemy at the hands of his personal retainers, who not infrequently sacrificed their own lives in devotion to their chief.

At this period (during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) the knight who, lance in hand, had been hurled from the saddle might draw his sword and kill the bull, his vassals being allowed to assist in placing the animal (by deft display of coloured cloaks) in a position to facilitate the death-stroke. Here, doubtless, originated the art of "playing" the bull, and incidentally sprang the professional bull-fighter.

For as these servants became experts, and by reason of their prowess gained extra wages, so proportionately such skill became of pecuniary value. Mercenaries of this sort were, nevertheless, despised—to risk their lives in return for money was regarded as an infamous thing. But at least they had inaugurated the regime of the highly paid matador of to-day.

During the first century after the Reconquest bull-fighting was opposed by several powerful influences, but each in turn it survived and set at naught. Isabel la Católica, horrified by the sight of bloodshed at a bull-fight which she personally attended, decided to prohibit all *corridas*; but that, she found, lay beyond even her great influence. Next, in 1567, the power of the Papacy was invoked in vain.

Pope Pius V., by a *bula* of November 20, forbade the spectacle under pain of excommunication, the denial of Christian burial, and similar ecclesiastical penalties; but he and his *bula* had likewise to go under in face of the national sentiment of Spain.

A noble bull fell to the lance of Isabel's grandson, H.M. the Emperor Charles V., in the Plaza Mayor of Valladolid amidst acclamation of countless admirers. This occurred during the

J. Grunhalt

festivals held to celebrate the birth of his eldest son, afterwards Phillip II.

In 1612 bull-fighting first assumed a financial aspect. Phillip III. conceded to one Arcania Manduno the emoluments accruing during the term of three lives from the *corridas de toros* in the city of Valencia. Charities and asylums benefited under this fund, but the bulk went in payment for professional services in the Plaza.

During the reign of Phillip IV.—that king being skilled in the use of lance and javelin (*rejón*), and frequently himself taking a public part—the *fiesta* advanced enormously in national estimation. English readers may recall the sumptuous *corrida* which marked the arrival of Charles I., with the Duke of Buckingham, at Madrid.

Later, during the reigns of the House of Austria, to face a bull with bravery and skill and to use a dexterous lance was the pride of every Spanish noble.

Phillip V., however, would have none of the spectacle, and then the nobility held aloof from the *corridas*; but their example proved no deterrent. For the hold of the national pastime on the Moro-hispanic race was too firm-set to be swept aside by alien influence, however strong; and when thus abandoned by the patricians, the hidalgos and grandees of Spain, the sport of bull-fighting (hitherto confined exclusively to the aristocracy) was taken up by the Spanish people. A further impulse was generated later on under Ferdinand VII., who obtained a reversal of the anathema of the Church on condition that some of the pecuniary profits of the *corridas* should swell the funds of the hospitals.

It was, however, during the first half of the eighteenth century that bull-fighting on a popular basis, as understood and practised at the present day, took its start. Then there stepped upon the enclosed arena the first professional *Toréro* amidst thrilling plaudits from tier above tier of encircling humanity. Never before had the bull been taken on by a single man on foot armed only with his good sword and scarlet flag—with these to pit his strength and skill against the weight and ferocity of a *toro bravo*—alone and unaided to despatch him. Such a man was Francisco Romero, erewhiles a shoemaker at Ronda—A.D. 1726—first professional *lidiador*. On his death at an advanced age, he left

five sons, all craftsmen of repute, who, in honour of their sire, formed a bull-fighting guild still known as the Rondénean School—distinguished from the later Sevillian cult by its more serious and dignified attack as compared with the prettiness and "swagger" of the Sevillano.

In that generation Francisco's son, Pedro Romero, appeared in rivalry with PEPE-ILLO, the new-risen star in the Sevillian firmament. It was, by the way, the master-mind of the latter which completed and perfected the reorganisation on popular lines of the national *fiesta* after Bourbon influence had alienated the aristocracy from their ancient diversion. The rivalry between these competing exponents of the two styles commenced in 1771, the pair representing each a supreme mastery of their respective schools, and only terminated with the death of Pepe-Illo in the Plaza of Madrid, May 11, 1801. The Sevillian style has since attained pre-eminence, appealing more to the masses by its nonchalance and apparent disregard of danger. When the best features of both schools are combined—as has been exemplified in more than one brilliant exponent of the art—then the letters of his name are writ large on the *cartels*.

One other famous name of that epoch demands notice—that of Costillares, who introduced the flying stroke distinguished as the *suerte de volapié*. Hitherto all *lidiadors* had received the onset of the bull standing—the *suerte de recibir*. In the *volapié* the charging bull is met half-way, an exploit demanding unswerving accuracy, strength of arm, and exact judgment of distance, since the spot permissible for the sword to enter, the target on the bull's neck, is no bigger than an orange.

The normal difficulty of sheathing the blade at that exact point on a charging bull is great enough; but is vastly increased in the *volapié*, or flying stroke, and the effect produced on the spectators emotional in the last degree.

Costillares also formalised the costumes of the different classes of bull-fighters. He flourished in 1760, and died of a broken heart owing to his right arm being injured, which incapacitated him from further triumphs. About that period Martinho introduced the perilous pole-jump, and José Candido stood out prominent for skill and extraordinary resource.

Intermediate episodes of minor importance we must briefly note. Thus Godoy in 1805 stopped bull-fights, but Joseph

Bonaparte in 1808 re-established the spectacle, in vain hope—a sop to Cerberus—of attaching sympathy to his dynasty.

On the return of Fernando VII. in 1814, he also prohibited the shows, only to re-authorise them the following year, while in 1830 he founded a school of Toromaquia in Seville. One famous *toréro*, matriculating thereat, inaugurated a new epoch. Francisco Montes carried popular enthusiasm to its highest apex. Joy bordering on madness possessed the Madrilenean ring when Montes handled the *muleta*. Yet as a matador he had serious defects.

In 1840 Cuchares appeared on the scene, and two years later the great disciple of Montes, José Redondo. The rivalry of these notable contemporaries lifted the *toréo* once more to a level of absorbing national interest. It will have been seen that whenever two brilliant constellations flash forth simultaneously, their very rivalry commands the sympathy and supreme interest of the Spanish people.

From 1852 El Tato stood out as a type of elegance and valour, the idol of the masses, till on June 7, 1859, a treacherous bull left him mutilated in the arena. Antonio Carmóna (El Gordito), commenced his career in 1857, alternating in the ring with El Tato and later with Lagartijo, the latter a brilliant *toréro* (or player of bulls) as distinguished from a matador. Consummate in every feint and artifice, Lagartijo could befool the animals to the top of his bent, yet as a matador, the final and supreme executor, he failed.

For twenty years (1867-87) the Spanish public were divided in their keen appreciation of contemporaneous masters, Lagartijo and Frascuelo. The latter, whose iron will and courage made amends for certain personal defects in the lighter rôle, had marvellous security in the final stroke.

Lagartijo and Frascuelo accentuate an era well remembered by enthusiasts in the Classic School of the *Toréo*. In their day all Spaniards were devoted, aye, passionate adherents of one or the other: all Spain was divided into two camps, that of Lagartijo and that of Frascuelo. The actual supporters of the ring were probably no more numerous then than to-day; but toreadors breathed that old-fashioned atmosphere in which a love of the profession was supreme—an heroic unselfishness, personal skill, and valour were the ruling motives. Pecuniary interest was a thing apart.

The career of the bull-fighter to-day is absolutely wanting in such virtue. Lagartijo and Frascuelo staked their lives each afternoon, through a love of their art, by the impress of honest nature, perhaps by inspiration of a woman's eyes. Into their calculations, ideas of lucre did not enter, money had no value.

Then came on the scene (1887) that bright particular star, Rafael Guerra (Guerrita) celebrated and admired—and with justice. But his coming destroyed for ever the legend of the disinterested *toréro*. The lover of the art for its own sake was no more, Guerrita was a mercenary of the first water. Admittedly first of modern bull-fighters, the aspiration of his soul was the possession of bank-notes, to be the clipper of many coupons! Neither passion, nor blood, nor favour of the fair inspired his sordid soul. At the supreme moment of danger, money, only money, was the motive which actuated him. In his desire for wealth, he succeeded. His unexpected retirement from the arena in the very apogee of his glory, and carrying away the accumulation of his thrift, was a shock to this warm-hearted people. Every vestige of the romantic halo with which personal prowess and graceful presence had surrounded him was destroyed. Guerrita as a player of bulls (*toréro*) was the first in all the history of the ring. As a "matador" also he was the most complete and certain. Unlike the majority of his compeers, he was reserved in his habits, and lived apart from the bizarre and tempestuous life of the ordinary bull-fighter, with its feminine intrigues and excitements. For that reason he had many enemies amongst his set; but of his claim to be in the very first rank there has never been a question. To see Guerrita wind the silken sash around his ribs of steel, as he attired himself for the arena, was a sight his patrons considered worth going many a mile to witness.[1]

Since his retirement, the show has fallen greatly, in the quality of the bull-fighter.

Luis Mazzantini created a temporary revolution in the annals of toromaquia (1885), lighting up anew the enthusiasm for the *fiesta*. He came not of the usual low, half-gipsy caste, but of the class which entitled him to the *Don* of gentle birth. Don Luis Mazzantini, the only professional bearing such a prefix, acquired at an unusually late period of life sufficient technical knowledge of bull-fighting to embolden him to enter the lists in

[1] The authors personally assisted at this *toilet*, Talavera, May 1891.

competition with professionals. He was thirty years of age when the heavy pay of the matador induced him to risk his life in the arena.

Whatever may be said of his failing as an artistic exponent of the art of Cucháres, he killed his bulls in a resolute manner, and re-animated the interest in the *corrida*, but his example was a bad one. Several men emulating his career have endeavoured to become improvised *torćros*, and, like him, to avoid the step-by-step climb to matador's rank. All have been failures. They wanted to begin where the bull-fighter of old left off.

Mazzantini has retired, unscathed, from his twenty years of perilous experience in the arena, and is now a civic light in the local government of the city of Madrid.

Since Guerrita, not a single matador of leading light has arisen. Reverte (1891), Antonio Fuentes (1893), and Bombita (1894) all attracted a numerous public; and after them we arrive at the lesser lights of the present day, Bombita II. and Machaquito.

Notwithstanding its present decadence in all the most essential qualities, yet the *fiesta de toros* is still, if not the very heart-throb of the nation, at least the single all-embracing symbol of the people's taste as distinguished from that of other lands. Racing has been tried and failed; there are no teeming crowds at football, nor silent watchers on the cricket-field. *La Corrida* alone makes the Spanish holiday.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SPANISH FIGHTING-BULL

HIS BREEDING AND TRAINING

The normal British idea of a bull naturally derives colour from those stolid animals one sees at home, some with a ring through the nose, and which are only kept for stud purposes, but occasionally evince a latent ferocity by goring to death some hapless herdsman.

Between such and the Spanish *Toro de Plaza* there exists no sort of analogy. The Spanish fighting-bull is bred to fight, and the keen experience of centuries is brought to bear on the selection of the fittest—that, moreover, not only as regards the bulls, for the cows also are tested both for pluck and stamina before admission to the herd-register. The result, in effect, assures that an animal as fierce and formidable as the wildest African buffalo shall finally face the matador.

The breeding of the fighting-bull forms in Spain a rural industry as deeply studied and as keenly competitive as that of prize-cattle or Derby winners in England.

At the age of one year preliminary tests are made, and promising youngsters branded with the insignia of the herd. But it is the completion of the second year that marks their critical period: for then take place the trials for pluck and mettle. The brave are set aside for the Plaza, the docile destroyed or gelded; while from the chosen lot a further selection is made of the sires for future years.

At these two-year-old trials, or *Tentaderos*, it is customary for the owner and his friends to assemble at the sequestered *rancho*—the event indeed becomes a rural fête, a bright and picturesque scene, typical of untrodden Spain and of the buoyant exuberance and dare-devil spirit of her people.

Nowhere can the exciting scenes of the *Tentadero* be witnessed to greater advantage than on those wide level pasturages that extend from Seville to the Bay of Cádiz. Here, far out on spreading *vega* ablaze with wild flowers, where the canicular sun flashes yet more light and fire into the fiery veins of the Andaluz—here is enacted the first scene in the drama of the *Toréo*. For ages these flower-strewn plains have formed the scene of countless *tentaderos*, where the young bloods of Andalucia, generation after generation, rival each other in feats of derring-do, of skill, and horsemanship.

The remote *estancia* presents a scene of unwonted revelry. All night long its rude walls resound with boisterous hilarity—good-humour, gaiety, and a spice of practical joking pass away the dark hours and by daylight all are in the saddle. The young bulls have previously been herded upon that part of the estate which affords the best level ground for smart manœuvre and fast riding, and the task of holding the impetuous beasts together is allotted to skilled herdsmen armed with long *garrochas*—four-yard lances, with blunt steel tip. All being ready, a single bull is allowed to escape across the plain. Two horsemen awaiting the moment, spear in hand, give chase, one on either flank. The rider on the bull's left assists his companion by holding the animal to a straight course. Presently the right-hand man, rising erect in his stirrups, plants his lance on the bull's *off flank*, near the tail, and by one tremendous thrust, delivered at full speed, overthrows him—a feat that bespeaks a good eye, a firm seat, and a strong arm. Some young bulls will take two or more falls; others, on rising, will elect to charge. The infuriated youngster finds himself faced by a second foe—a horseman armed with a more pointed lance and who has been riding close behind. This man is termed *el Tentador*. Straightway the bull charges, receiving on his withers the *garrocha* point; thrown back thus and smarting under this first check to his hitherto unthwarted will, he returns to the charge with redoubled fury, but only to find the horse protected as before. The pluckier spirits will essay a third or a fourth attack, but those that freely charge *twice* are passed as fit for the ring.

Should a young bull *twice* decline to charge the *Tentador*, submitting to his overthrow and only desiring to escape, he is condemned—doomed to death, or at best to a life of agricultural toil.

Not seldom a bull singled out from the *rodéo* declines to escape, as expected; but, instead, charges the nearest person, on foot or mounted, whom he may chance to espy. Then there is a flutter in the dovecotes! Danger can only be averted by skilled riding or a cool head, since there is no shelter. Spanish herdsmen, however (and amateurs besides), are adepts in the art of giving "passes" to the bull—a smart fellow, when caught thus in the open, can keep a bull off him (using his jacket only) for several moments, giving time for horsemen to come up to his rescue. Even then it is no uncommon occurrence to see horseman, horse, and bull all rolling on the turf in a common ruin. Seldom does it happen that one of these trial-days passes without broken bones or accidents of one kind or another.

For four to five more years, the selected bulls roam at large over the richest pasturages of the wide unfrequented prairies. Should pasture fail through drought or deluge, the bulls are fed on tares, vetch, or maize, even with wheat, for their début in public must be made in the highest possible condition. The bulls should then be not less than five, nor more than seven years old.

The *tentadero* at the present day brings together aristocratic gatherings that recall the tauromachian tournaments of old. Skill in handling the *garrocha* and the ability to turn-over a running bull are accomplishments held in high esteem among Spanish youth. Even the Infantas of Spain have entered into the spirit of the sport, and have been known themselves to wield a dexterous lance.

At length, however, the years spent in luxurious idleness on the silent plain must come to an end. One summer morning the brave herd find grazing in their midst sundry strangers which make themselves extremely agreeable to the lordly champions, now in the zenith of magnificent strength and beauty. These strangers are the *cabrestos* (or *cabestros*, in correct Castilian), decoy-oxen sent out to fraternise for a few days with the fighting race preparatory to the *Encierro*, or operation of convoying the latter to the city whereat the *corrida* is to take place. Each *cabresto* has a cattle-bell suspended round its neck in order to accustom the wild herd to follow the lead of these base betrayers of the brave. Thus the noble bulls are lured from their native plains through country tracks and bye-ways to the entrance of the fatal *toril*.

After the Stroke.

An animated spectacle it is on the eve of the *corrida* when, amidst clouds of dust and clang of bells, the tame oxen and wild bulls are driven forward by galloping horsemen and levelled *garrochas*. The excited populace, already intoxicated with bull-fever and the anticipation of the coming *corridas*, line the way to the Plaza, careless if in the enthusiasm for the morrow they risk some awkward rips to-day.

Once inside the lofty walls of the *toril* it is easy to withdraw the treacherous *cabestros*, and one by one to tempt the bulls each into a small separate cell, the *chiquero*, the door of which will to-morrow fall before his eyes. Then, rushing upon the arena, he finds himself confronted and encircled by surging tiers of yelling humanity, while the crash of trumpets and glare of moving colours madden his brain. Then the gaudy horsemen, with menacing lances, recall his day of trial on the distant plain —horsemen now doubly hateful in their brilliant glittering tinsel.

What a spectacle is presented by the Plaza at this moment! —one without parallel in the modern world. The vast amphi-theatre, crowded to the last seat in every row and tier, is held for some seconds in breathless suspense; above, the glorious azure canopy of an Andalucian summer sky; below, on the yellow arena, rushes forth the bull, fresh from his distant prairie, amazed yet undaunted by the unwonted sight and bewildering blaze of colour which surrounds him. For one brief moment the vast mass of excited humanity sits spell-bound; the clamour of myriads is stilled. Then the pent-up cry bursts forth in frantic volume, for the gleaning horns have done their work, and *Buen toro! buen toro!* rings from twice ten thousand throats.

We have traced in brief outline the life-history of our gallant bull; we have brought him face to face with the matador and his Toledan blade—there we must leave him.[1] In concluding this chapter, may we beg the generous reader, should he ever enter the historic precincts of the Plaza, to go there with an open mind, to form his own opinion without prejudice or bias. Let him remember that to untrained eyes there must ever fall unseen many of the finer "passes," much of the skilled technique and science of tauromachian art. The casual spectator necessarily

[1] The oft-described details of the bull-fight we omit; but should any reader care to peruse an impartial description thereof, written by one of the co-authors of the present work, such will be found in the *Encyclopædia of Sport*, vol. i. p. 151.

loses that; he perceives no more difficulty in the perilous *suerte de vol-á-pié* than in the simpler but more attractive *suerte de recibir*, and a hundred similar details. Finally, before crystallising a judgment, critics should endeavour to see a few second- or third-rate *corridas*. It is at these that the relative values of the forces opposed—brute strength and human skill—are displayed in truer and more speaking contrast. At set bull-fights of the first-class, the latter quality is often so marked as partly to obscure the difficulties and dangers it surmounts. Watch *toréros* of finished skill and the game seems easy—as when some phenomenal batsman, well set, knocks the best bowling in England all over the field. Yet that bowling, the expert knows, is not easy. Nor are the bulls. At second-rate fights the forces placed face to face are more evenly balanced; and there it is often the bull that scores.

The Miura Question

A raging controversy, illuminative of Tauromachia, has recently split into two camps the bull-fighting world and agitated one-half of Spain. The breeding of the fighting-bull is in this country a semi-æsthetic pursuit, analogous to that of short-horns or racehorses in England, and the possession of a notable herd the ambition of many of the grandees and big landowners of Spain.

Among the various crack herds that of Don Eduardo Miura of Sevilla had always occupied a prominent rank; while during recent years the power and dashing prowess of the *Miureno* bulls had raised that breed almost to a level apart, invested with a halo of semi-mysterious quality. Captures occurred at every *corrida*; man after man had gone down before these redoubted champions, and the minds of surviving matadors—saturated one and all with gipsy-sprung superstition—began to attribute secret or supernatural powers to the dreaded herd. Not a swordsman but felt unwonted qualm when meeting a *Miureno* on the sanded arena. Showy players with the *capa* and the banderillos proved capable of giving attractive exhibitions, but it was another matter when the matador stood alone, face to face with his foe. Even second-class *toréros* can, with almost any bull, show off their accomplishments in these lighter séances; but in the

supreme rôle—that of killing the bull as art demands—there is no room for half-measures or deceptions. To valour, ability must be united. When those two qualities are not both coupled and balanced, then one of two things happens: Either the scene becomes a dull one, a mixture of funk and feebleness made patent all round; or disaster is at hand. This one hears forecast in the strange cries of this meridional people—from all sides come the shouts of "*Hule! Hule!*" Now *Hule* is the name of the material with which the stretchers for the killed and wounded are covered!

At this period (summer of 1908) a combination of the bull-fighting craft attempted a boycott of the Miura herd, or at least double pay for killing them. This was done secretly at first, since neither would open confession redound to the credit of the "pig-tail," nor did it promise favourable reception by the public.

At this conjuncture a notable *corrida* occurred at Seville—six *Miurenos* being listed for the fight. Ricardo Torres (Bombita II.) despatched his first with all serenity and valour; with his second, a magnificent animal worthy of a royal pageant, he would doubtless have comported himself with equal skill but for an extraneous incident. Upon rushing into the arena this bull had at once impaled a foolhardy amateur named Pepín Rodriguez who (quite against all recognised rule) had madly sprung into the ring. The poor fellow was borne out only in time to receive the last religious rite.

At the precise moment when Ricardo stepped forth to meet his foe, the murmur reached his ear—Pepín was dead, and his superstitious soul sank down to zero at that whisper from without. When the critical moment arrived—the popular matador stood pale, nerveless, incapable. Then the scorn of the mighty crowd burst forth in monstrous yells. Ricardo Torres had fallen from the pinnacle of fame to the level of a clumsy beginner. In a moment he was disgraced, his increasing reputation ruined for ever under the eyes of all the world—and that by a *Miureno* bull. From that moment the fallen star organised his colleagues in open rebellion against the victorious breed.

The line of action adopted was to abuse and libel the incriminated herd. It was urged that the bulls lacked the true qualities of dash and valour and only scored by treachery; and especially insinuated that the young bulls were expressly taught at their *tentaderos*, or trials on the open plains, to discriminate between

shadow and substance—in other words, to seek the man and disdain the lure—this naturally making the rôle of matador more dangerous, and double pay was demanded. To outsiders it would appear that on the day when bulls learn this, bull-fighting must cease.

A storm burst that raged all winter—all classes taking part. Spain was rent in twain; press and people, high and low, joined issue in this unseemly wrangle. We cannot here enter into detail of the various schemes, fair and unfair, whereby the bull-fighters' guild sought to justify their action and their demands and to prejudice the terrible *Miurenos* in the public eye. They were seconded by most professionals of renown, and soon all but seven had joined the league. But the squabble with its resultant law-suits and sordid financial aspect finally disgusted the public.

Needless to add, a counter-association of bull-breeders had been forced into existence, which eventually, despite varied and particular personal interests unworthy of definition, united the opposition. Oh! it was a pretty quarrel and one in its essence peculiar to Spain. But it held the whole country engaged all winter in the throes of a semi-civil war!

At the first *corrida* of the following season—held at Alicante January 18, 1909, and graced by the presence of King Alfonso XIII. in person—the public delivered their verdict, filling the Plaza to overflowing, although the whole of the six champions were of the condemned Miura breed and the matadors, Quinito and Rerre, belonged to the recalcitrant Seven. The bull-fighters' guild had received a fatal blow.

Such was the situation, the mental equilibrium between the fiercely contending factions, as the crucial period approached—the Easter *corridas* at Seville. The *impresarios* of that function, having full grip of the circumstance, engaged matadors of minor repute—Pepete, Moréno de Alcalá, and Martin Vasquez. All three, although but of second rank, were popular and regarded as coming men.

Flaming posters announced that six champions of the Miura breed would face the swordsmen.

The occasion was unique, and D. Eduardo Miura rose to meet it, presenting six bulls of incomparable beauty, magnificent in fine lines, in dash, brute-strength, and valour, yet utterly devoid (as the event proved) of guile or lurking treachery. Such

animals as these six demanded a Romero, a Montes, or a Guerrita as equals; instead, these young *Toréros* who faced them, courageous though they were, lacked calibre for such an undertaking. This *corrida* marked an epoch, but it acquired the proportions of a catastrophe. The bye-word that "where there are bulls there are no matadors" became that afternoon an axiom.

A *gettatura*, or atmosphere of superstition, surrounded the bulls and unnerved or confounded their opponents. Pepete was caught by the first bull, Moréno de Alcalá by the fourth, while Martin Vasquez (already thrice caught) succumbed to the fifth.

The sixth bull thus remained unopposed champion of the Plaza—not a matador survived to face him, and it became necessary to entice an unfought bull (by means of trained oxen) to quit the arena—an event unprecedented in the age-long annals of Tauromachy!

A typical incident, trivial by comparison, intervened. A youthful spectator, frenzied to madness by the scene, had seized a sword, leapt into the ring, and . . . promptly met his death.

Every contention of the bull-fighters' guild had been falsified, and the association collapsed. A Sevillian paper summed up the event thus:—

> The six bulls were each worthy to figure in toromaquian annals for their beautiful stamp, their lines, weight, bravery, and caste. We witnessed a tragedy when, on the death of the fifth bull, not a matador remained. But had that tragedy been caused by malice, wickedness, or treachery on the part of the bulls, surely a declaration of martial law in this city would have been demanded by not a few! But that was not so; each of the six competed in the qualities of bravery, nobility, and adaptability—such bulls are worthy of better swordsmen.

CHAPTER XX

SIERRA DE GRÉDOS

We met, our trio, on the platform of Charing Cross—not classic but perhaps historic ground, since so many notable expeditions have started therefrom, with others of less importance.

The heat in Madrid towards the end of August (1896) was not excessive—less than we had feared. We enjoyed, that Sunday, quite an excellent bull-fight, although the bulls themselves had been advertised as of "only one horn" apiece (*de un cuerno*). There was no sign, however, of any cornual deficiency as each magnificent animal dashed into the arena, although with binoculars one could detect a slight splintering of one horn-point, a defect which had caused the rejection of that animal from the herd-list. For these bulls were, in fact, of notable blood—that of Ybarra of Sevillian *reyas*—and none bearing that name appear in first-class *corridas* save absolutely perfect and unblemished.

The point illustrates the keen appreciation of quality in the fighting-bull, which in Spain goes without saying, yet may well deceive the casual stranger. Thus an American party who breakfasted with us (always keen to get the best, but not always knowing where to find it) despised the "Unicorns" and reserved themselves instead for the opera. We enjoyed an excellent fight with dashing bulls—two clearing the barrier and causing a fine stampede among the military, the police, and crowds of itinerant fruit- and water-sellers who occupy the *Entre-barreras*.

These "Unicorns" proved really better bulls than at many of the formal *corridas*. Three young and rising matadors despatched the animals—two each. They were Galindo, Gavira, and Parrao—both the latter excellent. Gavira looked as if he might take first rank in his order, while Parrao displayed a coolness in the *lidia* such as we had seldom before séen—even to stroking the bull's

nose—while in the final scene he went in to such close quarters, "passing" the animal at half arm's-length, that the whole 10,000 in the Plaza held their breath. Parrao will become a first-fighter, unless he is caught, which certainly seems the more natural event.

That evening we were hospitably entertained at the British Embassy, where our host, the Chargé d'Affaires, regretted that the short fourteen-days' Ortolan season had just that morning expired. Thus, quite unconsciously, was an ornithological fact elucidated.

Next morning we were away by an early train, and after five hours' journey joined our staff, as prearranged. But here we committed the mistake of quartering in a country-town on the banks of the Tagus, instead of encamping in the open country outside. Bitterly did we regret having allowed ourselves to be thus persuaded. Long summer heats and parching drought had destroyed what primitive system of natural drainage may have existed in Talavera de la Reina and produced conditions that we revolt from describing. Oh! those foul effluvia amidst which men live, and feed, and sleep!

With intense delight, but splitting headaches, we left the plague-spot at earliest dawn and set out for the mountain-land. For thirty odd miles our route traversed a highland plateau; a group of five great bustard, gasping in the noon-day heat, lay asleep so near the track that we tried a shot with ball. Farther north, near Medina del Campo, we had also observed these grand game-birds feeding on the ripening grapes in the vineyards. Packs of sand-grouse (*Pterocles arenarius*) with musical croak flew close around. Spanish azure magpies abounded wherever our route passed through wooded stretches, and we also observed doves, bee-eaters, stonechats, crested and calandra larks, ravens, and over some cork-oaks wheeled a serpent-eagle showing very white below.

Towards evening the track began to ascend through the lower defiles of the great cordillera that now pierced the heavens ahead. Presently we entered pinewoods, resonant at dusk with the raucous voices of millions of wingless grasshoppers or locusts (we know not their precise name) that live high up in pines. Never before had we heard such strident voice in an insect.

At 4000 feet we encamped beneath the pines by a lovely trout-stream. This was the rendezvous whereat by arrangement we met with our old friends the ibex-hunters of Almanzór—savage perhaps to the eye, yet beyond all doubt radiantly glad to welcome back the foreigners after a lapse of years. No mere greed of dollars inspired that enthusiasm, but solely the bond of a common passion that bound us all—that of the hunter. It was, however, but sorry hearing to listen to the reports they told us around the camp-fire. Everywhere the ibex were yearly growing scarcer, dwindling to an inevitable vanishing-point, former haunts already abandoned—or, we should rather say, swept clean. Where but a score of years before, 150 ibex had been counted in a single *montería*, our friends reckoned that exactly a dozen survived. One remark especially struck us. "There remained," with glee our friends assured us, "one magnificent old goat, a ram of twelve years, out there on the crags of Almanzór." *One!* To *one* sole big head had it dwindled?

The valley of the Tagus divides two geological periods, and perhaps at one time divided Europe from a retiring Africa. Marked differences distinguish the fauna on either side of the river, and that of the north (with its 10,000 feet altitude) promised reward worthy the labours of investigation. Not a yard of that great mountain-land of Grédos has been trodden by British foot (save our own) since the days of Wellington. Hence it was an object with us to secure, not only ibex heads, but specimens of the smaller mammalia that dwell in those heights. Our mountain friends assembled round the camp-fire—twenty-five in all—each promised to take up this unaccustomed quest and to regard as game every hitherto unconsidered *bicho* of the hills, whether feathered, furred, or scaled. If ibex failed us, at least a harvest in such minor game we meant to assure.[1]

"MINOR GAME"

Three o'clock saw us astir, bathing in the dark burn while moonlight still streamed through sombre pines. Camp mean-

[1] In particular, remembering an incident that had occurred here in 1891, and recorded in *Wild Spain*, p. 147, we were anxious to ascertain if the lemming, or any relative of his, still survived in these central Spanish cordilleras. The marmot is another possible inhabitant.

while was broken up; tents and gear packed on ponies and mules, breakfast finished—we were off, heavenwards. Then, just as the laden pack-animals filed through the burn, there rode up a man—he had ridden all night—and bore a message that changed our exuberant joy to grief—bad news from home.

There could be no doubt—the writer must return at once. Within five minutes I had decided to make for a point on the northern railway beyond the hills and distant some sixty miles as the crow flies. Baggage and battery were abandoned; a handbag with a satchel of provisions and a wine-skin formed my luggage, and, leaving my companions in this wild spot, I set forth in the grey dawn on a barebacked mule devoid of saddle, bridle, or stirrups, and accompanied by two of our hill-bred lads, one riding pillion behind or running alongside in turn.

Where the grey ramparts of the Risco del Fraile and the Casquerázo frown on a rugged earth below I parted with my old pals, they to continue the ibex-hunt, I on my mournful homeward way.

Bee-eaters poised and chattered, brilliant butterflies (whose names I forgot to note), abounded as we rode along those fearful edges and boulder-studded steeps. Six hours of this brought us to a rock-poised hamlet of the sierra. The landlord of the *posada* was also the *Alcalde* (mayor) of the district, and even then presiding over a meeting of the council (*ayuntamiento*). Amidst dogs, children, fleas, and dirt, along with my two goat-herd friends, we made breakfast.

Thence over the main pass of Navasomera—no road, not the vestige of a track, and a tremendous ravine stopped us for hours, and for a time threatened to prove impassable. By patience and recklessness we lowered mule and ourselves down scrub-choked screes, and after some of the roughest work of my life gained a goat-herd's track which led upwards to the pass. After clearing the reverse slope we traversed for twenty miles a dreary upland (6000 feet) till we struck the head-waters of the Albirche river, where my lads tickled half-a-dozen trout and a *frog*! Kites beat along the stony hills, where wheatears and stonechats fluttered incessant, with dippers and sandpipers on the burn below.

We halted at a lonely *venta* (wayside wine-shop), where assembled goat-herds courteously made room, and passed me their wine-skin. Presently one of them asked whither I went, remarking,

"Your Excellency is clearly not of this province." Three or four skinny rabbits hung on the wall, and the landlord, after inquiring what his Excellency would eat, assured me he had plenty of everything, was yet so strong in his commendation of *rabbit* that I knew those wretched beasties were the only food in the place. Presently with my two lads, and surrounded by mules, cats, dogs, poultry, wasps, and fleas, we sat down to dine on trout, rabbits-*á-pimiento*, and *chorizo* (forty horse-power sausage). I believe my boys also ate the frog!

Two hours after dark we were still dragging along the upland, while the outlines of the jagged cordillera behind had faded in gathering night. I could scarce have sat much longer on that bony saddleless mule when a light was descried far below, and, on learning that we were still twenty miles from our destination, I decided to put up for the night at that little *venta* of Almenge, sleeping on bare earth alongside my boys, and close by the heels of our own and sundry other mules.

At breakfast there sat down, besides ourselves and hostess, sundry muleteers, all sympathetic and commiserate since my mission had become known. I was hurrying homewards to distant Inglaterra—so Juanito had explained—because my brother was *poco bueno* —not very well. The hostess looked hard, and said, "Señor, it must be *muy grave* (very serious), or they would not have telegraphed for the *caballero* to return."

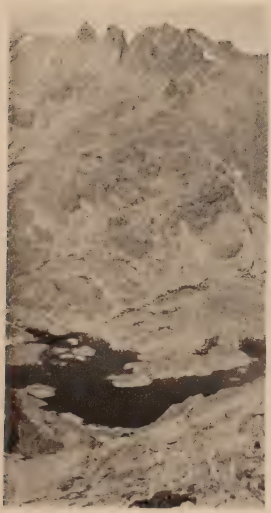
Many more hours of tedious mule-riding followed ere at last from lowering spurs we could see the end of the hills and the white track winding away till lost to view across the plain below.

Here in the highest growth of trees were grey shrikes (*Lanius meridionalis*), adults and young, besides missel-thrushes, turtle-doves, etc. On the level corn-lands below, which we now traversed for miles, we observed bustards (these, we were told, retired to lower levels in September)—nothing else beyond the usual larks and kestrels common to all Spain.

It was past noon ere the long ride was completed, and we

MOREZON. CUCHILLAR DE NAVÁJAS. ALMANZÓR.

THE CIRCO DE GRÉDOS.



LAGUNA DE GRÉDOS.
A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW—SHOWS THE AMEÁL AND CUCHILLAR DEL GUETRE.

LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS LAGUNA.
HERMANITOS CASQUERÁZO.

SCENES IN SIERRA DE GRÉDOS.

entered the ancient city that boasts bygone glories, splendid temples, and memories of mediæval magnificence, but which is now . . . well, Avila. But one feature of Avila demands passing note—its massive walls, withstanding the centuries, full forty feet in height by fifteen feet broad. An hour later the Sûd-express dashed up whistling into the station, to the genuine alarm of my leather-clad mountain-lads, who recoiled in fear from an unwonted sight. They, noticing that the officials of the train also spoke a foreign tongue (French), asked me if such things (*i.e.* railway trains) were "only for your Excellencies"—meaning for foreigners, *vos-otros*.

At Paris a reassuring telegram filled me with joy indescribable, but in London and at York further messages intensified anxiety. On August 29 I reached home, and on the evening of September 3 doubts were resolved, and the silver cord was loosed.

The Plaza de Almanzór, with its immediate environment, presents a panorama of mountain-scenery unrivalled, not only in the whole cordillera of Grédos, but probably in all Spain—it may be questioned if the world itself contains a more striking landscape than that known as the "Circo de Grédos." Briefly put, a vast central amphitheatre of rock—really four-square (though known as the "Circo") in the depths of which nestle an alpine lake—is enclosed by stupendous rock-walls and precipices of granite; some of these smooth and sheer, others rugged and disintegrated or broken up by snow-filled gorges of intricacies that defy the power of pen to describe. Three of these vast mural ramparts stand almost rectangular, the fourth shoots out obliquely, traversing the abysmal *enclave* and all but closing the fourth side of its quadrilateral. The rough sketch-map at p. 141 shows the configuration better than written words, while the photos convey, so far as such can, some idea of the scenery.[1]

The actual peak of Almanzór which dominates the whole "Circo," as viewed from the north, culminates in a flattened cone, the summit being split into two huge rock-needles or pinnacles separated by an unfathomed fissure between. Only one of these needles—and that the lower—has yet been scaled. The loftier of the pair, though it only surpasses its fellow by a

[1] For these, as well as graphic notes on the subject, we are indebted to Sr. D. Manuel F. de Amezúa, the most experienced and intrepid explorer of the Sierra de Grédos.

few yards in height, is so sheer, its surface so devoid of crevice or hand-hold, that the ascent (without ropes and other appliances) appears quite impracticable.

Will the reader seat himself in imagination at the spot marked (*) on the map. Surveying the scene from this point, the whole opposite horizon is filled by the Altos de Morezón —a jagged and turreted escarpment pierces the sky, while its frowning walls dip down, down in endless precipices to the inky-black waters of the Laguna far below.

Towards the left one's view is interrupted by an extraordinary mass of upstanding granite, disintegrated and blackened by the ages, known as the Ameál de Pablo—in itself a virgin mountain, as yet untrodden by human foot. This colossus, glittering with snow-striæ, surmounts the oblique ridge aforesaid, that of the Cuchillar del Guetre, which traverses two-thirds of the "Circo," leaving but a narrow gap between its own extremity and the opposite heights of Morezón.

Continuing towards the right, there rises to yet loftier altitudes the black contour of the Risco del Fraile, beloved of ibex; while adjacent on the north-west, but on slightly lower level, uprear from the snow-flecked skyline[1] three more unscaled masses—rectangular monoliths like giant landmarks. This trio is distinguished as Los Hermanitos de Grédos, their abruptness of outline almost appalling as set off by an azure background.

Farther to the right (in the angle of the square) two more mountain-masses—knife-edged, jagged, and embattled along the crests—frown upon one another across a gorge rent through their very bowels. These two are the Alto del Casquerázo and the Cuchillar de las Navájas, while the interposed abyss—the Portilla de los Machos—cuts clean through the great cordillera, forming a natural gateway between its northern and its southern faces. As the name implies, this gorge is the main route of the ibex from their much-loved Riscos del Fraile to their second chief resort, the Riscos del Francés, which occupy the southern face of the sierra whose snowfields defy even the heats of August.

From our present standpoint the southern wall of the Circo—the Cuchillar de las Navájas—is not visible. This section of the quadrilateral is equally abrupt and intricate, dropping in massive bastions towards the level of the lake. Just beyond the Plaza de

Almanzór a second deep gorge or "pass"—the Portilla Bermeja—unites the northern and the southern faces.

Behind where we sit lies yet another panorama of terrible wildness, again dominated by rock-walls of fantastic contour—the valley of Las Cinco Lagunas. But right here our rock-descriptive powers give out—we can only refer to the map.

GRIFFON VULTURE AND NEST

CHAPTER XXI

SIERRA DE GRÉDOS (*Continued*)

IBEX-HUNTING

Why try to describe the distress of that morning or the efforts it cost, during fourteen hours, to gain the summits of Grédos? Again and again what we had taken for our destination proved to be some intervening ridge with another desperate gorge beyond. Suffice it that it was an hour after dark ere we finally lifted the cargoes from the dead-beat beasts. Presently the moon arose, and against her pale effulgence towered the gnarled and pinnacled peaks of Almanzór, piercing the very skies—a lovely but to me an appalling scene. Their altitude is 8800 feet.

Our whole plan and ambitions in this expedition were to find and stalk the ibex—the very undertaking which had proved beyond our powers during two strenuous efforts in former years as readers of *Wild Spain* already know.

Now in all stalking it must be obvious even to non-technical readers that the first essential is to bring under survey of the binoculars a very considerable extent of game-country every day; but here, in the chaotic jumble of perpendicular or impending precipice or smooth rock-faces inclined at angles that we dare not traverse, any such extensive survey is a sheer impossibility. Alpine climbers or others in the fullest enjoyment of youth and activity might get forward at a reasonable speed. To us, already past that stage, the feat was impossible, *i.e.* by our own sole exertions. That we, of course, knew in advance; but our plan was to supplement our own powers by availing the splendid rock-climbing abilities of our friends, the goat-herds of Almanzór, on whom we relied for at least finding the game in the first instance.

Ramón and Isidóro were away by the first glint of dawn,

"At the Apex off All the Spains."
(IBEX ON THE PLAZA DE ALMANZÓR.)

disappearing in opposite directions so as to encompass both the surrounding rock-ranges and to mark ibex in stalkable positions. We awaited their return in camp, not only with anxiety, but with some impatience, since the temperature had fallen so low that no wraps or blankets served to keep us warm while inactive.

After a fruitless search of four hours, the scouts returned; no better results attended a second morning and a third—nor our impatience. Clearly the second resource, that of "driving," must now be tried. It was only ten o'clock that third morning, and already the drivers, who had left at dawn so as to reach agreed positions in case of the failure of resource No. 1, would be approaching the fixed points four miles away on the encircling heights, whereat, by signal, they would know whether to proceed with the "drive" or to return by the circuitous route they had gone. Meanwhile we have ourselves to reach the "passes" in the heights above, and the scramble and struggle which that ascent involved we must leave readers to imagine. Bertram gets through such work fairly well, but the writer, a generation older, is fain to choose a lower place, reputed a likely "pass." Here, after waiting an hour, we descried the drivers showing-up at different points of those encircling Riscos de Morezón, climbing like flies down perpendicular faces, disappearing in gorges, and doing all that specialised hunters can. But not an ibex came our way. When we reassembled, it proved that three goats had been seen, one a ram. Thus ended that day—cruel work amidst lovely though terrible scenery—and never a wild-goat within our sight.

On the morrow our selected positions were to be yet nearer the heavens above than those of yesterday—along the highest skylines of Grédos, between the Plaza de Almanzór and the Ameál. From our camp my own post was pointed out, a niche in that far-away impossible ridge. How long, I asked Ramón, do you imagine it will take me to reach it? Our friends, who, lean and lythe of frame, a specialised race of mountaineers, mock mountain-heights and appreciate too little (though they recognise) our relative weakness, reply, "Two hours." But at that precise moment, while I yet scanned with binoculars the scene of this supreme effort, examining in a species of horror that infinity of piled rock-masses, their details cruelly developed in a blazing sunlight, just then, across the field of the glass soared a single lammergeyer. Now I know that these giant birds-of-prey span

some ten feet from wing to wing, and the tiny speck that this one, reduced by distance, appeared on the object-glass helped me to gauge what lay before us.

A black point that from camp I had mentally noted as a landmark proved to be a mass of dolomite seamed with interjected striæ of glistening felspar, big as a village church!

I had demanded four hours, and precisely within that period

"THE WAY OF AN EAGLE IN THE AIR"

(Lammergeyer—*Gypaëtus barbatus*)

reached my celestial pinnacle. Bertram was beyond and higher still—where, I could not see. But my own post seemed to me as sublime as even an ibex-hunter could desire, at the culminating apex of the Spains and the centre of dispersal of four giant gorges each bristling with bewildering chaos of crags and rock-ruin, while above, to right and left, towered yet loftier *riscos*.

At these serene altitudes life appeared non-existent. The last signs of a cryptogamic vegetation we had left below, and I could now see eagles or vultures soaring almost perpendicularly beneath and reduced by distance to moving specks.

Yet shortly before reaching our posts, along one of those

awesome shelves with a 500-feet drop below, a touch from Ramón drew my attention to a truly magnificent old ibex-ram in full view, quietly skipping from crag to crag some 300 yards above. So slow and deliberate were his movements, with frequent halts to gaze, that time was allowed to gain a rational position and to enjoy for several minutes a glorious view through binoculars. Twice he halted in front of small snow-slopes, against which those curving horns were set off in perfect detail. Then with measured movements, making good each foot-hold, alternated by marvellous bounds to some rock-point above, the grand wild-goat vanished from view. His course led into a rock-region that already our drivers were encompassing, hence we had strong hopes that we might not have seen the last of him.

Two herds of ibex, it transpired, were enclosed in this beat; one comprising nine females and small beasts, the second two with a two-year-old ram; but our big friend was seen no more.

I had, however, enjoyed a scene that went far to compensate for the tribulations it had cost.

Late that night the two lads who had accompanied A. returned to camp. After riding fifteen hours on Wednesday, he could do no more, slept at a *venta*, and reached Avila (which he considers twenty leagues from Ornillos, the spot where he left us) at noon on Thursday, where he caught the Sûd-express, and to-night will be in Paris. He sent us a few pencilled words, urging us to utmost endeavours with the wild-goats, as this will be in all probability our *last chance*. I agree, for the natives kill off male and female alike, only a few wily old rams remain, a mere fraction of the stock which formerly existed. The shepherds who come to these high tops to pasture their herds for a few weeks each summer have chances to kill the ibex which they do not neglect. When Don Manuel Silvela, the statesman, was here twenty years ago, some 150 ibex were driven past his post above the Laguna de Grédos. Not a quarter of that number now survive in all the range.

August 26.—Everything outside the tents was frozen solid last night, but with sunrise the temperature goes up with a bound. We had trout for breakfast, caught by hand from the burn below. To-day the work was easier, for the two beats were both small and more or less on the same level as our camp. The first lasted five hours, but gave no result. We then moved to

the west, always rising till we found ourselves on the summit of another ridge looking down into a mighty gorge and upon the mysterious rock-cradled Cinco Lagunas de Grédos. The plains of Castile lay beneath us like a map, towns and villages distinguishable through the glass though not without. Bertram was placed in a "pass," about 100 yards wide, piercing the topmost peaks, myself in a similar *portilla* rather lower down. An hour later Dionýsio, who had climbed the crag above me, whence he could see into the abyss beneath, signalled as he hung over the edge of his eyrie that something was coming. Then he slid down to my side to tell me that three goats were moving slowly up the gorge. Dionýsio returned to his ledge, and for half an hour I enjoyed that state of breathless suspense when one expects each moment to be face to face with a coveted trophy. The three goats, I perceived, must pass through this *portilla* on one side or the other of the rock behind which I lay expectant. At last there caught my ear the gentle patter of horned hoofs on rocks, but oh! . . . it was succeeded by the bang of a gun. Dionýsio had fired from his ledge twenty yards above me. The three ibex had come on to within ten yards of where I lay, looking, as it were, down a tunnel. The wind had been right enough, but it appeared an erratic puff had elected to blow straight from us to them. They caught it, and in a flash disappeared down the ravine, Dionýsio, as he hung from the ledge, giving them a parting shot. That was friend Dionýsio's version of the event. What actually occurred, all who are experienced in this wild-hunting will divine without our telling. I ran from my post along the lip of the abyss—luckily there was a bit of fairly good going—hoping to get a chance as the game turned upwards again; for at once, on hearing a shot, the beaters far below joined in a chorus of wild yells to push them upwards. This they succeeded in doing, but the goats passed beyond my range. I now saw there were four in all—three females and a handsome ram. Dionýsio made a further effort to turn them, which so far succeeded that the ram separated and bounded up the rocks towards the higher pass, where he ran the gauntlet of Bertram within thirty yards. Now the whole stress and burden of a laborious expedition fell upon the youngest shoulders, for B. was barely out of his teens, and more skilled with shot-gun than with ball. The responsibility proved almost too great

MARQUÉS DE VILLAVICIOSA DE ASTURIAS.

MARQUES DE ALANA.

TWO SPANISH IBEX SHOT IN SIERRA DE GRÉDOS, JULY, 1910.

—almost, but not quite; for one bullet had taken effect, and the rocks beyond the little "pass" were sprinkled with blood The late hour, 4 P.M., and the long scramble campwards forbade our following the spoor that night, but the ram was recovered some two miles beyond the point where we had last seen him—horn measurements $24\frac{1}{8}$ inches, by $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches basal circumference.

The beaters reported having seen several ibex during this drive, two small rams, females, and kids—thirteen in all. We devoted a couple more days to this section of the sierra, but both proved unsuccessful so far as regards the one grand ibex-ram which we had seen. Here, on the Riscos del Fraile, and later on at Villarejo, we each spared small beasts; but at last were fain to be content with a three-year-old goat, whose head adorns our walls.

Before daylight we were aroused by the breaking-up of camp, and by seven o'clock had taken a downward course from that lofty eyrie which we had occupied for ten days. It was a lovely ride with bright sunlight lighting up every detail of the mountain scenery, while every mile brought evidence of the lowering altitude—first, in green herbage, then in brushwood and stunted trees, till at mid-day we reached the region of pines in the cool valley of the river Tormes. Here we halted, and while lunch was being prepared, enjoyed a swim in those crystal torrents. That afternoon was devoted to trout, but with meagre results. The stream gleamed like polished steel, everything that moved in the waters could be seen, and doubtless its denizens enjoyed a similar advantage as regards things in the other element. At any rate, none save the smaller trout would look at a fly; so we continued our journey, following the river-side in the direction of the mountains of Villarejo.

Dionýsio and Caraballo had gone to a hamlet lower down for bread and wine. There was no bread, and having to wait till it was baked, delayed the march. Meanwhile, we wandered on through pine-woods with the beautiful stream fretting and foaming, and collecting a few bird-specimens, though none of much interest. We did, however, come across two gigantic nests of the black vulture, flat platforms of sticks, each superimposed on the summit of a lofty pine. Even in these uplands the black vulture nests in March, when the whole land is yet enveloped in snow, and while frequent snowstorms sweep down the valleys. So closely

does the parent vulture incubate, that she allows herself to be completely buried on her nest beneath the drifting snow. On these hanging steeps the eyries are overlooked from above, yet not a vestige of the sitting vulture can be seen until she is disturbed by a blow from an axe on the trunk, or by a shot fired —then off she goes, dislodging a cloud of snow from her three-yard wings as she launches into space.

BLACK VULTURE (*Vultur monachus*)

The black vulture lays but one huge egg, often boldly marked and suffused with dark-brown and rusty blotches and splashes, in contrast with the eggs of the griffon vulture, which are usually colourless or, at most, but faintly shaded.

The latter, so abundant in Andalucia, is remarkably scarce in Grédos, where we saw rather more eagles than vultures. The chief bird-forms of the high sierra were ravens and choughs, ring-ouzels, rock-thrush and black-chat (*Dromolaea leucura*). The alpine accentor (*Accentor collaris*) and alpine pipit (*Anthus*

spipoletta) also reach to the highest summits; the blue thrush lower down.

In the valley of the Tormes and among the pines many British species were at home, such as blackbirds and thrushes, redstarts, nuthatches, and Dartford warblers; besides the *two* southern wheatears, since found to be but *one* dimorphic form!

The Riscos de Villarejo

Three hours later the mule-train overtook us, and we pursued the track upwards towards the Riscos de Villarejo till darkness obliged us to encamp. The jagged outline ahead, marking our destination, looked far away; we could go no nearer to-night, and outspanned on a tiny lawn on the mountain-slope. Once more we had left tree and shrub far below, but the dry *piorno*-scrub made fire enough to cook a frugal supper. The hunters, with their stew-pots balanced on stones, sat round us in a circle.

Next morning we were alert, as usual, before the dawn—called at 4 A.M.—and off again on another terrible climb towards the summits. It is no mild trudge through turnips this 1st of September, but one more effort to interview in his haunts the Spanish mountain-ram.

At 6000 feet we reached a point beyond which no domestic beast can go. Here, leaving our own men to encamp, the upward climb with the hunters begins. This day and each of the two following were devoted solely to stalking, each of us separately with his guide taking a diverging course along two of the lower ridges of the sierra. Two female ibex were descried in a position which might without difficulty have been stalked. These, however, we left in peace; though, as it proved, they were the only animals seen before we regained camp, an hour after dark, tired out and empty-handed once more. On the fourth day we drove this same rock-region, but without success, only two goats, both small males, being seen. The entire failure of this venture was a disappointment, as ibex were known to frequent these reefs. An explanation was suggested that a herd of domestic goats had approached too near their exclusive wild congeners, which had fled to a neighbouring mountain. That mountain, we arranged, should be explored at daylight on the morrow by two of our

hunters. The cold at night in camp was intense, and our Andalucian retainers complained bitterly, although they kept an enormous fire going; yet during the day the heat had been excessive, and the sun burns terribly at these altitudes.

The following morning we tried a comprehensive drive encompassing two gorges composed of sublimely grand rocks. As I look over the edge of the black pinnacle that forms my post the sheer drop below is appalling, and above me tower similar masses in rugged and frowning splendour. But not a goat was seen till quite late in the afternoon, when two females slowly approaching were descried. For a mile we watched them, so deliberate was their progress, till they disappeared through the very "pass" where A. had shot his some five years before.

September 6.—Our scouts returned last night, having failed to locate ibex on the opposite mountain; so we made a final effort on the Riscos of Villarejo—again blank. Well! we have done our best for six days on those terrible rocks, on which we must now turn our backs for the present.

At the village of Arénas de San Pedro we bade good-bye to all our people; even their wives (clad in the same short skirts of greens and other brilliant hues we had noticed in '91, for fashions change slowly in the sierra) came down from Guisando to say farewell to the Inglèses. Here Ramón brought in the head of Bertie's ibex shot the week before; Ramón presented me with his powder-horn and bullet-pouch as a keepsake, and Juanito with a mountain-staff. Our visit had marked an epoch in the simple annals of the sierra and of its honest and primitive inhabitants.

. . . . . .

To-day we rejoice to add that, as already fully set forth at pp. 141-142, wild-goats may be counted in troops on the erewhiles ibex-denuded crags of Almanzór.

CHAPTER XXII

AN ABANDONED PROVINCE

(ESTREMADURA)

CAN this really be Europe—crowded Europe ? For four long days we have traversed Estremenian wilds, and during that time have scarce met a score of folk, nor seen serious evidence of effective human occupation. At first our northward way led through rolling undulations, the western foothills of the long Sierra Moréna, clad with the everlasting gum-cistus, with euonymus, a few stunted trees, and the usual aromatic brushwood of the south. Only at long intervals—say a league or two apart —would some tiny cot, of woodcutter perhaps, or goat-herd, gleam white amidst the rolling green monotone. Here and there wild-thyme (*cantuéso*) empurpled the slopes as it were August heather, but the chief beauty-spot was the rose-like flower of the cistus, now (May) in fullest bloom—waxy white, with orange centre and a splash like black velvet on each petal. Next, for a whole day we ride through open forest of evergreen oak and wild-olive, the floor carpeted with tasselled grasses, tufty broom, and fennel. We encamp where we list and cut firewood, none saying us nay or inquiring by what authority we do these things.

One evening while we investigated an azure magpie's nest in an ilex hard by the tents, four donkey-borne peasants appeared. Though they rode close by, yet they showed no sign, passing silent and incurious. The few natives we met hereabouts all seemed listless, apathetic, uncommunicative, in striking contrast with their sprightly southern neighbours beyond the hills in Andalucia. We read that Estremadura is a "paludic" province and unhealthy ; possibly the malarial microbe has sapped energy.

To forest, next day succeeded more rolling hills with ten-foot bush and scattered trees. From a crag-crowned ridge, the culminat-

ing point of these, there fell within view three human habitations —*three*, in a vista of thirty miles—two tall castles perched in strong places, the third apparently a considerable farm. The landscape is often lovely enough, park-like, with infinite sites for country halls; yet all, all seems abandoned by man and beast. The few wild creatures observed included common and azure magpies, hoopoes, and bee-eaters, rollers, doves, kestrels, with a sprinkling of partridge and an occasional hare.

A landowner in this province (Badajoz) endeavoured to preserve the game on his estate. At first all went well. As their enemies decreased, partridge rapidly multiplied. But thereupon occurred an influx of extraneous vermin (foxes and wild-cats) from adjacent wilds, and Nature restored her former exiguous balance of life.

ROLLER (*Coracias garrula*)

The scene changes. For the next twenty miles there is not a tree or a bush, hardly a living thing on those dreary levels save larks and bustards. The hungry earth shows brown and naked through its scanty herbage, stript by devouring locusts.

Travelling by rail the abandonment seems yet more striking, since thus we cover more ground. True, along the line cluster some slight attempts at cultivation elsewhere absent; but these amount to nothing—a few patches of starveling oats, six to eighteen inches high, with scarce a score of blades to the yard! Two men are reaping with sickles. Each has his donkey tethered hard by, and at nightfall will ride to his distant village, a league away maybe, hidden in some unnoticed hollow. Scarce a village have we seen.

The monotony wearies. The abject barrenness of Estremadura, its lifelessness, is actually worse, more pronounced and depressing, than we had anticipated. Now the far horizon on the north

bristles with battlements, towers, and spires—that is Trujillo, an old-world fortress of the Caesars, crowning a granite koppie in yon everlasting plain. The ten leagues that yet intervene recall, in colour and contour, a mid-Northumbrian moor, wild and bleak —here the home of bustards, stone-curlew, sand-grouse, . . . and of locusts.

From the topmost turrets of Trujillo let us take one more survey of this Estremenian wilderness ere yet we pronounce a final judgment.

Ascend the belfry of Santa Maria la Mayor and you command

TRUJILLO

an unrivalled view. Spread out beneath your gaze stretch away tawny expanses of waste and veld to a radius averaging forty miles, and everywhere girt-in by encircling mountains. To the north Grédos' snowy peaks pierce the clouds, 100 kilometres away, with the Sierra de Gata on their left, Bejar on the right. To the eastward the Sierra de Guadalupe,[1] far-famed for its shrine to Our Lady of that ilk, closes that horizon ; while to westward the ranges of Sta. Cruz and Montánches shut in the frontier of Portugal. What a panorama—a circle eighty miles across !

Yet in all that expanse you can detect no more evidence of

[1] This range is, in fact, a northern outspur of the Montes de Toledo, which occupy the whole space betwixt Tagus and Guadiana. Its highest peak, La Cabeza del Moro, reaches 5110 feet.

human presence than you would see in equatorial Africa—surveying, let us say, the well-known Athi Plains from the adjoining heights of Lukénia.

We are aware that already, in describing La Mancha, we have employed an African simile; but here, in Estremadura, the comparison is yet more apposite and forceful than in the wildest of Don Quixote's country. We will vary it by likening Estremadura rather to the highlands of Transvaal—the land of the back-veld Boer—than to Equatoria. Here, as there, rocky koppies stud the wastes, and (differing from La Mancha) watercourses traverse them, with intermittent pools surviving even in June, stagnant and pestilent. Such in Africa would be jungle-fringed—worth trying for a lion! Here their naked banks scarce provide covert for a hare.

"SCAVENGERS"

An index of the poverty-stricken condition of Estremadura is afforded by the comparative absence of the birds-of-prey. Never do the soaring vultures—elsewhere so characteristic of Spanish skies—catch one's eye, and very rarely an eagle or buzzard. A province that cannot support scavengers promises ill for mankind.

In his mirror-like "Notes from Spain," Richard Ford suggested that the vast unknown wildernesses of Estremadura would, if explored, yield store of wealth to the naturalist, and each succeeding naturalist (ourselves included) followed that clue. Therein, however, lurked that old human error, *ignotum pro mirabili*. Deserted by man, the region is equally avoided by bird and beast. We write generally and in full sense of local exceptions—that wild fallow-deer, for example, find here one, possibly their only European home;[1] that red deer of superb

[1] Wild fallow-deer are indigenous among the infinite scrub-clad hills that fringe the course of the Tagus, as well as in various *dehesas* in the province of Caceres—those of Las Corchuelas and de Valero may be specified. The wild fallow are larger and finer animals than the others.

dimensions, roe, wolves, and wild-boars abound on Estremenian sierra and *vega*. Then, too, there may well be isolated spots of interest in 20,000 square miles, but which escaped our survey. Yet what we write represents the essential fact—Estremadura is a barren lifeless wilderness and offers no more attraction to naturalist than to agriculturist.

The cause of all this involves questions not easily answered. In earlier days the case may have been different. Obviously the Romans thought highly of Estremadura and meant to run it for all it was worth. The Caesars were no visionaries, and such colossal works as their reservoirs and aqueducts at Merida, the massive amphitheatre and circus at the same city (a half-completed bull-ring stands alongside in pitiful contrast), besides their construction of a first-class fortress at Trujillo, all attest a matured judgment. After the Romans came the Goths, and they, too, have left evidence of appreciation (though less conspicuous) alike in city and country. Four hundred years later the Arabs overthrew the Goths on Guadalete (A.D. 711), and within two years had overrun two-thirds of Spain. But the Moor (so far as we can see) despised these barren uplands, or perhaps assessed them at a truer value—a single strong outpost (Trujillo) in an otherwise worthless region.

Much or little, however, each of those successive conquerors found *some* use for Estremadura. A totally different era opened with the fall of Moslem dominion. After the *Reconquista* and subsequent extermination of the Moors (seventeenth century), Estremadura was utterly abandoned, by Cross and Crescent alike, till the highland shepherds of the Castiles and of León, looking down from its northern frontier, saw in these lower-lying wastes a useful winter-grazing. Then commenced seasonal nomadic incursions thereto, pastoral tribes driving down each autumn their flocks and herds, much as the Patriarchs did in Biblical days—or the Masai in East Africa till yesterday.

Though the land itself was ownerless, shadowy prescriptive rights gradually evolved, and under the title of *Mestas* continued to be recognised by the pastoral nomads till abolished by Royal Decree in the sixteenth century. From that date commenced the subdivision of Estremadura into the present large private estates —again recalling the back-veld Boers, who hate to live one within sight of another, except that here owners are non-resident.

All this may explain superficially the existing desolation. The essential causes, however, are, we believe, (1) barrenness of soil; and (2) an enervating climate, fever-infected by stagnant waters, dead pools, and ubiquitous shallow swamps that poison the air and produce mosquitoes in millions.

Gazing in reflective mood upon those magnificent memorials of Roman rule at Merida, one is tempted to wonder whether, after all, the silent ruins (with a stork's nest on each parapet) do not yet point the true way to Estremenian prosperity—IRRIGATION (plus energy—a quality one misses in Estremadura).

Trujillo

Founded 2000 years back (by Augustus Caesar), this out-of-the-world city has a knack of periodically dropping out of history—skipping a few centuries at a time—meanwhile presumably dragging on its own dreamy unrecorded existence, "by the world forgot," till some fresh incident forces it on the stage once more. There were stirring times here while, for near a thousand years, the upland *vegas* were swept and ravaged by three successive waves of foreign invasion. Then Trujillo relapsed into trance, skipped the middle ages, and awoke to find at its gates another foreign foe—this time the French.

And the city reflects these vicissitudes. The Roman fortress, magnificent in extent and military strength, completely covers the rugged granite heights, imposing still in crumbling ruin. Forty-foot ramparts with inner and outer defences, bastions and flanking towers, machicolated and pierced for arrow fire, crown the whole circuit of the koppie. Signs of ancient grandeur everywhere meet one's eye; but contrasts pain at every turn. For filthy swine to-day defile palaces; donkeys are stalled in sculptured *patios* whence armoured knight on Arab steed once rode forth to clatter along the stone-paved ravelins that led to the point of danger. From mullioned embrasures above, whence the Euterpes and Lalagés of old waved tender adieux, now peer slatternly peasants; crumbling battlements form homes for white owls and bats, kestrels, hoopoes, and a multitude of storks such as can nowhere else be seen congregated in a single city. The sense of desolation is accentuated by finding such feathered recluses as blue rock-thrush and blackchat actually nesting in the very citadel itself.

The citadel marks the era of war. The Goths followed and despised fortifications. Their ornate palaces, enriched with escutcheons and sculptured device, lie below, outside the Roman walls.

After the Goths and after the Moors, Trujillo enjoyed a transient awakening when Pizarro, son of an Estremenian swineherd, with Cortez (also born hard by), swept the New World from Mexico to the Andes, and the glory of her sons, with the gold of the Incas, poured into the city. Thereafter destiny altered. Instead of consolidating new-won dominions by fostering commerce, exploiting their resources by establishing forts and factories, plantations, harbours, and the like, Spain directed her energies to missionising. Instead of commercial companies with fleets of merchantmen, she sent out sacred Brotherhoods, friars of religious orders, and studded the New World with empty names, all acts right enough and laudable in their own proper time and place.

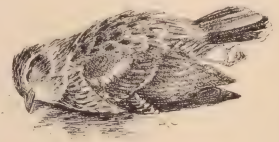
Trujillo boasts an industry in the manufacture of a rough red-brown earthenware, chiefly tall water-jars, amphora-shaped, which damsels carry upright on their heads with marvellous balance; and iron-spiked dog-collars as here represented. These are not suitable for lap-dogs, but for the huge mastiffs employed in guarding sheep and which, without such protection, would be devoured by wolves!

WOLF-PROOF DOG-COLLAR
(Six-inch diameter.)

Hitherto our journeys have led us chiefly through the Estremenian plain, but after passing Plasencia the country changes. We enter the outliers of those great sierras that shut out Estremadura from León and Castile, from Portugal—and the world! Here one quickly perceives signs of greater prosperity, due in part to the heavier rainfall from the hills, to a slightly richer soil, but mainly to the superior energy of hill-folk. Wherever the soil warrants it, cultivation is pushed right up amidst the jungled slopes of the hills.

In the folds of the sierra grow magnificent woods of Spanish chestnut with some walnut trees, and among these we observed

many fresh species of birds, including:—nuthatch (not seen elsewhere in Spain), green woodpecker, common (but no azure) magpies, golden orioles, pied and spotted fly-catchers, grey and white wagtails (breeding), whitethroats and nightingales, longtailed tits, woodlarks, corn-buntings, rock-sparrows, and quite a number of warblers (spectacled, rufous, and subalpine, Bonelli's and melodious willow-warblers), besides the usual common species —serins, chaffinches, robins, wrens, and so on. On the sterile upland plateaux, both here and in Castile, the black-bellied sand-grouse breeds, as well as stone-curlew, bustard, and the usual larks and chats.



GRANADILLA

At the extreme northern verge of the plain one encounters a singular survival of long-past and forgotten ages, the "fenced city" of Granadilla, so absolutely unspoilt and unchanged by time that one breathes for a spell a pure mediæval air. Granadilla is mentioned in no book that we possess; but it stands there, nevertheless, perched on a rocky bluff above the rushing Alagón, and entirely encompassed by a thirty-foot wall. Not a single house, not a hut, shows up outside that rampart, and its single gate is guarded by a massive stone-built tower.

This tower, we were told by a local friend, was erected after the "Reconquest" (which here occurred about 1300), but the bridge which spans the Alagón, immediately below, is attributed to the Romans—more than a thousand years earlier! and the town itself to the Moors—a pretty tangle which some wandering archaeologist may some day unravel.[1] That the Moors established a settlement here, or hard by, we are confident owing to the

[1] Immediately adjoining the south approach to the bridge over the Alagón is sculptured on the bluff a heraldic device representing a figure plucking a pomegranate (*Granada*) from a tree—the arms of Granadilla. There is an inscription, with date, beneath; but these we failed to decipher.

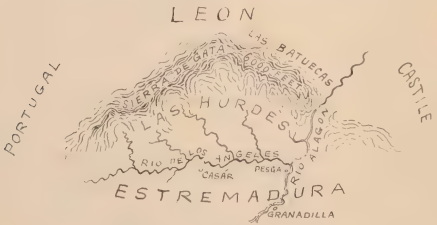
existence of extensive *huertas* (plantations) a few miles up the banks of Alagón. This is just one of those *enclaves* of rich soil for which the Arabs always had a keen eye; and ancient boundary-walls, with evidence of extreme care in irrigation and cultivation, all bespeak Moorish handiwork. These *huertas* are planted with fig, pomegranate, cherry, and various exotic fruit-trees, besides cork-oak and olive; every tree displaying signs of extreme old age—though that strikes one in most parts of Spain. Never have we seen more luxuriant crops of every sort than in those ancient *huertas*. Yet they are inset amid encircling wastes!

Granadilla (its name surely suggests cherished memories in its founders of the famous Andalucian *vega*) lies at the gate of that strange wild mountain-region called Las Hurdes.

CHAPTER XXIII

LAS HURDES (ESTREMADURA) AND THE SAVAGE TRIBES THAT INHABIT THEM

Isolated amidst the congeries of mountain-ranges that converge upon León, Castile, and Estremadura, lies a lost region that bears this name. The Hurdes occupy no small space; they represent no insignificant nook, but a fair-sized province—say fifty miles long by thirty broad—severed from the outer world; cut off



SKETCH-MAP OF LAS HURDES

from Portugal on the one side, from Spain on the other; while its miserable inhabitants are ignored and despised by both its neighbours.

Who and what are these wild tribes (numbering 4000 souls) that, in a squalor and savagery incredible in modern Europe, cling, in solitary tenacity, to these inhospitable fastnesses?

Possibly they are the remnants of Gothish fugitives who, 1200 years ago, sought shelter in these hills from Arab scimitars; other theories trace their origin back to an earlier era. But whether Goths or Visigoths, Vandals or other, these pale-faced Hurdanos are surely none of swarthy Arab or Saracenic blood;

and equally certainly they are none of Spanish race. The Spanish leave them severely alone—none dwell in Las Hurdes. Being neither ethnologists nor antiquaries, nor even sensational writers, the authors confine themselves to their personal experience, stiffened by a study of what the few Spanish authorities have collated on the subject.

Whatever their origin may have been, the Hurdanos of to-day are a depraved and degenerate race, to all intents and purposes savages, lost to all sense of self-respect or shame, of honesty or manliness. Too listless to take thought of the most elementary necessities of life, they are content to lead a semi-bestial existence, dependent for subsistence on their undersized goats and swine, on an exiguous and precarious cultivation, eked out by roots and wild fruits such as acorns, chestnuts, etc., and on begging outside their own region.

First, as to their country. Picture a maze of mountains all utterly monotonous in uniform configuration—long straight slopes, each skyline practically parallel with that beyond, bare of trees, but clad in shoulder-high scrub. On approaching from the south, the hills are lower and display delightful variety of heaths (including common heather); but as one penetrates northwards, the bush is reduced to the everlasting gum-cistus, and elevations become loftier and more precipitous till they culminate in the sheer rock-walls of the Sierra de Gata. Here, in remote glens, one chances on groves of ilex and cork-oak, whose gnarled boles attest the absence of woodcutters, while huge trunks lie prostrate, decaying from sheer old age. Here and there one sees an ilex enveloped to its summit in parasitic growths of creepers and wild-vine, whose broad, pale-green leaves contrast pleasingly with the dusky foliage and small leaf of its host.

In the deep gorges or canyons of these mountains are situate the settlements, called *Alquerías*, of the wild tribes, most of them inaccessible on horseback. That of Romano de Arriba, for example, is plunged in such an abyss that from November to March no ray of sunshine ever reaches it. A similar case is that of Casa Hurdes, which, as seen from the bridle-track leading over the Sierra de Portéros into Castile, appears buried in the bottom of a crevasse. Others, in the reverse, are perched on high, amidst crags that can only be surmounted by a severe scramble up broken rock-stairways.

These *alquerías*—warrens we may translate the word—consist of den-like hovels straggling without order or huddled together according as the rock-formation may dictate—some half-piled one on another, others separate. Many are mere holes in the earth—lairs, shapeless as nature left their walls, but roofed over with branches and grass held in place by schistose slabs that serve for slates. Hardly, in some cases, can one distinguish human dwellings from surrounding bush, earth, or rock. As our companion, a civil guard, remarked of one set of eyries that adhered to a cliff-face, they rather resembled "the nests of crag-martins" (*nidos de vencéjos*) than abodes of mankind.

Within are two tiny compartments, the first occupied by goats or swine, the second littered with bracken on which the whole family sleep, irrespective of age or sex. There is no light nor furniture of any description; no utensils for washing, hardly even for cooking. True, there is in some of the lairs a hollowed trunk which may serve as a bed, but its original design (as the name *batane* imports) was for pressing the grapes and olives in autumn. No refuse is ever thrown out; even the filthy ferns are retained for use as manure for the orchards—in a word, these poor creatures habitually sleep on a manure-heap. Even wild beasts, the wolves and boars, are infinitely more attentive to domestic cleanliness and purity.

Another *alquería* visited by the authors, that of Rubiáco, consisted of a massed cluster of sties embedded on the slopes of a low ridge bordered on either side by crystal-bright mountain streams. So timid and shy are the natives that several were descried actually taking to the hill on our appearance. A distribution of tobacco, with coloured handkerchiefs for the women, restored a measure of confidence, and we succeeded in collecting a group or two for the camera. The day, however, was dull and overcast, and rain, unluckily, fell at that precise moment.

These people, clad in patch-work of rags, leather and untanned skins, were undersized, pallid of complexion, plain (though we would scarce say repulsive) in appearance, with dull incurious eyes that were instantly averted when our glances met. The men, otherwise stolid and undemonstrative, affected a vacuous grin or giggle, but utterly devoid of any spark of joy or gladness. Many (though by no means all) displayed distinctly flattened noses, somewhat of the Mongolian type; and not even among

the younger girls could a trace of good looks be detected. All went bare-foot, indeed bare-legged to the knee.

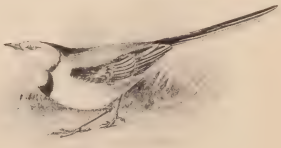
On opening the door of a den—an old packing-case lid, three feet high, secured by a thong of goatskin—two pigs dashed forth squealing, and at the first step inside the writer's foot splashed in fetid moisture hidden beneath a litter of green fern. It being dark within, and too low to stand upright, I struck a match and presently became aware of a living object almost underfoot. It proved to be a baby, no bigger than a rabbit, and with tiny black bead-like eyes that gleamed with a wild light—never before have we seen such glance on human face. While examining this phenomenon, a sound from the inner darkness revealed a second inmate. We crept into this lair, scrambling up two steps in the natural rock, and from the fern-litter arose a female. She stood about three feet high, had the same wild eyes, unkempt hair, encrusted brown with dirt, hanging loose over her naked shoulders —a merciful darkness concealed the rest. She appeared to be about ten years old, and dwarfed and undersized at that; yet she told us she was fourteen, and the mother of the rabbit-child, also that its father had deserted her a month ago—ten days before its birth. The lair contained absolutely no furniture, unless dead fern be so styled. Can human misery further go?

The next hovel did contain a *batane*, or hollowed tree, in which lay some scanty rags like fragments of discarded horse-cloths. So lacking are these poor savages in any sufficient clothing, whether for day or night, that the children, we were assured, were habitually laid to sleep among the swine, in order to share the natural warmth of those beasts. In one abode only did we discover such convenience as a wooden chest. It contained a handful of potatoes, some chestnuts, and a broken iron cooking-pot. We examined another den or two—practically all were alike. If anything was there that escaped our attention we had an excuse—the aroma (personal, porcine, and putrid) was more than the strongest could endure for many minutes on end.

We turned away. Mingled feelings of loathing, of pity, and of despair at the utter hopelessness of it all filled our minds. There, not a hundred yards away, a contrasted sight met our eyes, one of humbler nature's most perfect scenes: a fledgeling brood of white wagtails tripped gaily along the burnside—types of pure spotless beauty, overflowing with high spirits and the joy

of life. A few minutes later, and a pair of ring-plovers (*Aegialitis curonica*) on the river accentuated the same pitiful contrast.

Such small cultivation as exists in the Hurdes is carried on under supreme difficulty. The hills themselves are uncultivable, and the only opportunities that present themselves are either chance open spaces amidst interminable rock, or such rare and narrow strips of soil as can exist between precipitous slopes and the banks of the streams. Here little garden-patches, thirty or forty feet long by a dozen in width, are reclaimed; but the very earth is liable to be swept away by winter-floods pouring down the mountain-sides, and has to be replaced by fresh soil carried —it may be long distances—on men's shoulders. Here a few potatoes may be raised and in the broader valleys scant crops of



WHITE WAGTAIL

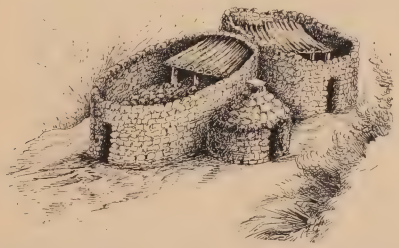
rye. The few fruit trees are neglected, and therefore give short yield, though what little is produced is of exquisite flavour, comprising figs, cherries, a sort of peach (*pavia*), olives, and vines. All crops are subject to the ravages of wild-boars, which roam in bands of a dozen to a score, fearless of man and molested by none; while wolves take toll of the flocks.

Red deer also wander freely and unpreserved over these ownerless hills—possibly the only place in Europe where such is the case. We inquired whether many were shot, but were told that such an event occurred rarely, though the Hurdano gunner might often approach within close range. "We are not *enseñados* [instructed] in the arts of chase," explained our informant. A few partridges and hares are found, with trout in the upper waters.

Despite their degradation, the Hurdanos, we were assured, display no criminal taint such as is inherent among Gipsies.

As regards the habits and customs of these people, we here roughly transcribe from the work of Pascual Madoz [1] some selected extracts that appear to be as accurate to-day as when they were written some sixty years ago.

The food of the Hurdanos is as noxious as it is scanty. The potato is the general stand-by, either boiled or cooked with crude goat's suet; sometimes beans fried in the same grease, and lastly the leaves of trees, boiled; with roots, the stalks of certain wild grasses, chestnuts, and acorns. Bread is practically unknown—all they ever have is made of coarse rye and such crusts as they obtain by begging outside their district. Only when at the point of death is wheaten bread provided.



A WOLF-PROOF SHEEPFOLD ON THE ALAGÓN, NORTH ESTREMADURA
Walls 10 feet high: note the shepherd's dwelling alongside. Within are sheep.

Their clothing consists of a shapeless garment reaching from the hip to the knee, a shirt without collar, fastening with one button, and a sack carried over the shoulder. They have no warm clothing and all go barefoot. The women are even less tidy and dirtier than the men. Never have they a vestige of anything new—nothing but discarded garments obtained by begging, or in exchange for chestnuts, at the distant towns. Their usual "fashion" is never to take off, to mend, or to wash any rag they have once put on—it is worn till it falls off through sheer old age and dirt. They never wash nor brush their hair, and go bare-legged like the men.

These, moreover, are the richest; the majority being clad in goatskins (untanned) that they kill or that die. These skins the men fix round

[1] *Diccionario geografico, estadistico, y historico de España*, by Pascual Madoz (Madrid, 1845).

their necks, girt at waist and round the knees with straps; the women merely an apron from the waist downward.

Men and women alike are dwarfed in stature and repugnant in appearance, augmented by their pallor and starveling look. On the other hand, they are active and expert in climbing their native mountains. There is no outward difference in the sexes as regards their lives and means of subsistence.

All their environment tends to make them untractable and savage (*sylvaticos*), shunning contact with their kind, even fleeing at sight and refusing to speak. They have no doctors nor surgeons, relying on certain herbs for medicines; yet they live long lives. They only recognise the passing seasons by the state of vegetation and of the atmosphere. They sow and reap according to the phases of the moon, of which they preserve an accurate observation. Religion and schools alike are unknown. They glory in their freedom from all moral suasion, and rejoice in the most brutal immorality and crime—including parricide and polygamy. There are *alquerías* wherein no priest has set foot, nor do they possess the faintest sense of Christian duties.

It seems incredible that in the midst of two provinces both wealthy and well reputed there should exist a plague-spot such as we have painted, unknown as the remotest kraals of Central Africa.

Thus Pascual Madoz in 1845, and but little external change has become apparent in sixty-five subsequent years.[1] Churches, it is true, have been erected, priests and schoolmasters appointed. Amelioration, however, by such means can only come very slowly —if at all. The physical and domestic status of these poor savages must first be raised before they are mentally capable of assimilating the mysteries of religion. Spain, however, owes them something. They are heavily taxed—beyond their power to pay in cash. Thus they are cast into the power of usurers. In each *alquería*, we were told, is usually found one man more astute than the rest, and he, in combination with some sordid scoundrel outside, exploits the misery of his fellows. A species of semi-slavery is thus established—in some ways analogous to the baneful system of *Caciquismo* outside.

The Hurdanos are also subject to the conscription and furnish forty to fifty recruits yearly to the Spanish army. Curiously, time-expired men all elect to return to their wretched lot in the

[1] A later Spanish work, the *Diccionario enciclopedico hispano-americano* (Barcelona, 1892), regards some of Pascual Madoz's descriptions as over-coloured and exaggerated. Our own observation, however, rather tended to confirm his views and to show that subsequent amelioration exists rather in name than in fact.

mountains. On our asking one of these (he had served at Melilla), "Why?" his reply was, "for liberty."[1]

There is a villainous custom in vogue that hurls these poor wretches yet farther down the bottomless pit. This abomination rages to-day as it did a hundred years ago: we therefore again leave old Pascual Madoz to tell the tale in his own words:—

> Many women make a miserable livelihood—it is indeed their only industry—by rearing foundling infants from the hospitals of Ciudad Rodrigo and Placencia. So keen are they of the money thus obtained that one woman, aided by a goat, will undertake to rear three or four babes—all necessarily so ill-tended and ill-fed as rather to resemble living spectres than human beings. Cast down on beds of filthy ferns and lacking all maternal care, the majority perish from hunger, cold, and neglect. The few that reach childhood are weaklings for life, feeble and infirm.

This repulsive "industry" continues to-day, a sum of three dollars a month being paid by the authorities of the cities named to rid themselves of each undesired infant. The effect—direct and incidental—upon morals and sexual relationship in the *alquerías* of the Hurdes may (in degree) be deduced—it cannot be set down in words. Thus the single point of contact with civilisation serves but to accentuate the degradation.

[1] The Hurdanos, we were told, make bad soldiers. Being despised by their comrades, they are only employed on the menial work of the barracks. Many, from long desuetude, are unable to wear boots.

CHAPTER XXIV

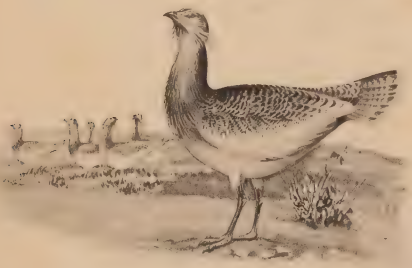
THE GREAT BUSTARD

Over the vast expanse of those silent solitudes, the corn-growing steppes of Spain—all but abandoned by human denizens—this grandest and most majestic of European game-birds forms the chief ornament. When the sprouting grain grows green in spring, stretching from horizon to horizon, you may form his acquaintance to best advantage. And among the things of sport are few more attractive scenes than a band of great bustards at rest. Bring your field-glass to bear on the gathering which you see yonder, basking in the sunshine in full enjoyment of their mid-day siesta. There are five-and-twenty of them, and immense they look against the green background of corn that covers the landscape—well may a stranger mistake the birds for deer or goats. Many sit turkey-fashion, with heads half sunk among back-feathers; others stand in drowsy yet ever-suspicious attitudes, their broad backs resplendent with those mottled hues of true game-colour, their lavender necks and well-poised heads contrasting with the snowy whiteness of the lower plumage.[1] The bustard are dotted in groups over an acre or two of gently sloping ground, the highest part of which is occupied by a single big *Barbudo*—a bearded veteran, the sentinel of the pack. From that elevated position he estimates what degree of danger each living thing that moves on the open region around may threaten to his company and to himself. Mounted men cause him less concern than those on foot. A horseman slowly directing a circuitous course may even approach to within a couple of hundred yards ere he takes alarm. It was the head and neck of this sentry that first appeared to our distant view and disclosed the

[1] The white on a bustard's plumage exceeds in its intensity that of almost any other bird we know. It is a dead white, without shade or the least symptom of any second tint so usual a feature in white.

whereabouts of the game. He, too, has seen us, and is even now considering whether there be sufficient cause for setting his convoy in motion. If we disappear below the level of his range, he will settle the point negatively, setting us down as merely some of those agricultural nuisances which so often cause him alarm but which his experience has shown to be generally harmless —for attempts on his life are few and far between.

Another charming spectacle it is in the summer-time to watch a pack of bustard about sunset, all busy with their evening feed among the grasshoppers on a thistle-clad plain. They are working against time, for it will soon be too dark to catch such lively



THE GREAT BUSTARD

prey. With quick darting step they run to and fro, picking up one grasshopper after another with unerring aim, and so intent on pursuit that the best chance of the day is then offered to a gunner, when greed for a moment supplants caution and vigilance is relaxed. But even now a man on foot stands no chance of coming anywhere near them. His approach is observed from afar, all heads are up above the thistles, every eye intent on the intruder; a moment or two of doubt, two quick steps and a spring, and the broad wings of every bird in the pack flap in slowly rising motion. The tardiness and apparent difficulty in rising from the ground which bustards exhibit is well expressed in their Spanish name *Avetarda*[1] and recognised in the scientific cognomen

[1] *Avetarda* is old Spanish, the modern spelling being *Abutarda*.

of *Otis tarda*. Once on the wing the whole band is off with wide swinging flight to the highest ground in the neighbourhood.

The chase of the great bustard presents characteristics and attractions peculiar to itself and differing from that of all other winged game. Rather it resembles the scientific pursuit of big game; for this is a sport in which the actual shot becomes of secondary importance, merely a culminating incident—the consummation of previous forethought, fieldcraft, and generalship. Success in bustard-shooting—alike with success in stalking—is usually attributable to the leader, who has planned the operation and directed the strategy, rather than to the man who may have actually killed the game. We here refer exclusively to what we may be permitted to call the scientific aspect of this chase, as practised by ourselves and as distinguished from other (and far more deadly) methods in vogue among the Spanish herdsmen and peasantry. Before describing the former system, let us glance at native methods of securing the great bustard.

During the greater part of the year bustard are far too wary to be obtained by the farm-hands and shepherds who see them every day—so accustomed are the peasantry to the sight of these noble birds that little or no notice is taken of them and their pursuit regarded as impracticable. There is, however, one period of the year when the great bustard falls an easy prey to the clumsiest of gunners.

During the long Andalucian summer a torrid sun has drunk up every brook and stream that crosses the cultivated lands; the chinky, cracked mud, which in winter formed the bed of shallow lakes and lagoons, now yields no drop of moisture for bird or beast. The larger rivers still carry their waters from sierra to sea, but an adaptive genius is required to utilise these for purposes of irrigation. All water required for the cattle is drawn up from wells; the old-world lever with its bucket at one end and counterpoise at the other has to provide for the needs of all. These wells are distributed all over the plains. As the herdsmen put the primitive contrivance into operation and swing up bucketful after bucketful of cool water, the cattle crowd around, impatient to receive it as it rushes down the stone troughing. The thirsty

animals drink their fill, splashing and wasting as much as they consume, so that a puddle is always formed about these *bebideros*. The moisture only extends a few yards, gradually diminishing, till the trickling streamlet is lost in the famishing soil.

These moist places are a fatal trap to the bustard. Before dawn one of the farm-people will conceal himself so as to command at short range all points of the miniature swamp. A slight hollow is dug for the purpose, having clods arranged around, between which the gun can be levelled with murderous accuracy. As day begins to dawn, the bustard will take a flight in the direction of the well, alighting at a point some few hundred yards distant. They satisfy themselves that no enemy is about, and then, with cautious, stately step, make for their morning draught. One big bird steps on ahead of the rest; and as he cautiously draws near, he stops now and again to assure himself that all is right and that his companions are coming too—these are not in a compact body, but following at intervals of a few yards. The leader has reached the spot where he drank yesterday; now he finds he must go a little nearer to the well, as the streamlet has been diverted; another bird follows close; both lower their heads to drink; the gunner has them in line—at twenty paces there is no escape; the trigger is pressed, and two magnificent bustards are done to death. Should the man be provided with a second barrel (which is not usual), a third victim may be added to his morning's spoils.

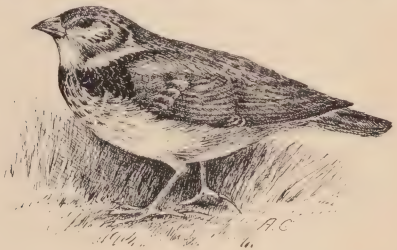
Comparatively large numbers of bustard are destroyed thus every summer. It is deadly work and certain. Luckily, however, the plan enjoys but a single success, since bands, once shot at, never return.

A second primitive method of capturing the great bustard is practised in winter. The increased value of game during the colder months induces the bird-catchers, who then supply the markets with myriads of ground-larks, linnets, buntings, etc., occasionally to direct their skill towards the capture of bustard by the same means as prove efficacious with the small fry—that is, the *cencerro*, or cattle-bell, combined with a dark lantern.

As most cattle carry the *cencerro* around their necks, the sound of the bell at close quarters by night causes no alarm to ground-birds. The bird-catcher, with his bright lantern gleaming before its reflector and the cattle-bell jingling at his wrist, prowls nightly around the stubbles and wastes in search of roosting birds.

Any number of bewildered victims can thus be gathered, for larks and such-like birds fall into a helpless state of panic when once focussed in the rays of the lantern.

When the bustard is the object of pursuit, two men are required, one of whom carries a gun. The pack of bustard will be carefully watched during the afternoon, and not lost sight of when night comes until their sleeping-quarters are ascertained. When quite dark, the tinkling of the *cencerro* will be heard, and a ray of light will surround the devoted bustards, charming or frightening them—whichever it may be—into still life. As the familiar sound of the cattle-bell becomes louder and nearer,



CALANDRA LARK
A large and handsome species characteristic of the corn-lands.

the ray of light brighter and brighter, and the surrounding darkness more intense, the bustards are too charmed or too dazed to fly. Then comes the report, and a charge of heavy shot works havoc among them. As bands of bustards are numerous, this poaching plan might be carried out night after night; but luckily the bustards will not stand the same experience twice. On a second attempt being made, they are off as soon as they see the light approaching.

The third (and by far the most murderous) means of destruction is due, not so much to rural peasantry as to *cazadores*—shooters from adjoining towns—men who should know better, and whom, in other respects, we might rank as good sportsmen; but who, alas! can see no shame in shooting the hen-bustards with their half-fledged broods in the standing corn during June and July—albeit the deed is done in direct contravention of the game-laws! Dogs,

especially pointers, are employed upon this quest when the mother-bustards, being reluctant to leave their young, lie as close as September partridges in a root-crop; while the broods, either too terrified or too immature to fly, are frequently caught by the dogs. We regret that there are those who actually descant with pride upon having slaughtered a dozen or more of these helpless creatures in a day; while others are only restrained from a like crime by the scorching solar heats of that season.

More bustards are killed thus than by all the other methods combined—a hundred times more than by our scientific and sportsmanlike system of driving presently to be described.

Except for this unworthy massacre of mothers with their broods in summer, and the two clumsy artifices before mentioned, the bustards are left practically unmolested—their wildness and the open nature of their haunts defy all the strategy of native fowlers. The hen-bustard deposits her eggs—usually three, but on very rare occasions four—among the green April corn; incubation and the rearing of the young take place in the security of vast silent stretches of waving wheat. The young bustards grow with that wheat, and, ere it is reaped (unless prematurely massacred), are able to take care of themselves. A somewhat more legitimate method of outwitting the great bustard is practised at this season. During harvest, while the country is being cleared of crops, the birds become accustomed to see bullock-carts daily passing with creaking wheel to carry away the sheaves from the stubble to the *era*, or levelled threshing-ground, where the grain is trodden out, Spanish fashion, by teams of mares. The loan of a *carro* with its pair of oxen and their driver having been obtained, the cart is rigged up with *estéras*—that is, esparto-matting stretched round the uprights which serve to hold the load of sheaves in position. A few sacks of straw thrown on the floor of the cart save one, in some small degree, from the merciless jolting of this primitive conveyance on rough ground. Two or three guns can find room therein, while the driver, lying forward, directs the team with a goad.

This moving battery fairly resembles a load of sheaves, and well do we remember the terrible, suffocating heat we have endured, shut up for hours in this thing during the blazing days of July and August. The result, nevertheless, repays all suffering. We refer to no mere cynegetic pride but to the enduring joy of

observing, at close quarters and still unsuspicious, these glorious game-birds at home on their private plains. The local idea is to fire through a slit previously-made in the *estéras*: but somehow, when the cart stops and the game instantly rises, you find (despite care and practice) that the birds always fly in a direction you cannot command or where the narrow slit forbids your covering them. Hence we adopted the plan of sliding off behind as the cart pulled up, thus firing the two barrels with perfect freedom. We have succeeded by this means in bringing to bag many pairs of bustard during a day's manœuvring.

SPANISH THISTLE AND STONECHAT

We now come to the system of bustard-driving, which we regard as practically the only really legitimate method of dealing with this grand game. From the end of August onwards the young bustards are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves. The country is then cleared of crops, and while this precludes the birds being "done to death" as in the weeks immediately preceding, yet the ubiquitous thistles (often of gigantic size, ten or twelve feet in height), charlock, and *rizagas* provide welcome covert for concealing the guns, while the heat still renders the game somewhat more susceptible to the artifices of the fowler. This is the easiest period.

As the season advances the hunter's difficulties increase. The brown earth becomes daily more and more naked, while files of slow-moving ox-teams everywhere traverse the stubble, ploughing league-long furrows twenty abreast. These factors combine to aid the game and stretch to its utmost limit the venatic instincts of the fowler.

Let us now attempt to describe a day's bustard-driving on scientific lines. The district having being selected, it is advisable to send out the night before a trustworthy scout who will sleep at the *cortijo* and be abroad with the dawn in order to locate precisely the various *bandadas*, or troops of bustard, in the neighbourhood. The shooting-party (three or four guns for choice, but in no case to exceed six [1]) follow in the morning—riding, as a rule, to the rendezvous; though should there be a high-road available it is sometimes convenient to drive (or nowadays even to motor), having in that case sent the saddle-horses forward, along with the scout, on the previous day.

Arrived at the *cortijo*, the scout brings in his report, and at once guns and drivers, all mounted, proceed towards the nearest of the marked *bandadas*. Not only are the distances to be covered so great as to render riding a necessity, but the use of horses has this further advantage that bustard evince less fear of mounted men and thus permit of nearer approach. The drivers should number three—the centre to flush the birds, two flankers to gallop at top speed in any direction should the game diverge from the required course or attempt to break out laterally.

Ten minutes' ride and we are within view of our first *bandada* still a mile away. They may be feeding on some broad slope, resting on the crest of a ridge, or dawdling on a level plain; but wherever the game may be—whatever the strategic value of their position—at least the decision of our own tactics must be clinched at once. No long lingering with futile discussion, no hesitation, or continued spying with the glass is permissible. Such follies instil instant suspicion into the astute brains on yonder hill, and the honours of the first round pass to the enemy.

For this reason it is imperative to appoint one leader vested

[1] A large number of horsemen inevitably excites suspicion in game unaccustomed to see more than three or four men together.

with supreme authority, and whose directions all must obey instantly and implicitly.

Needless to say, that leader must possess a thorough knowledge both of the habits of bustard and the lie of a country—along with the rather rare faculty of diagnosing at a glance its "advantages," its dangers, and its salient points over some half-league of space. None too common an attribute that, where all the wide prospect is grey or green, varying according to ever-changing lights, and the downlands so gently graded as occasionally to deceive the very elect. Much of the bustard-country appears all but flat, so slight are its folds and undulations; while even the more favouring regions are rarely so boldly contoured as Salisbury Plain. The leader must combine some of the qualities of a field-marshal with the skill of a deer-stalker, and a bit of red-Indian sleuth thrown in. Luckily, such masters of the craft are not entirely lacking to us.

The thoughts revolving in the leader's mind during his brief survey follow these general lines: First, which is (*a*) the favourite and (*b*) the most favourable line of flight of those bustards when disturbed; secondly, where can guns best be placed athwart that line; thirdly, how can the guns reach these points unseen? A condition precedent to success is that the firing-line shall be drawn around the bustards fairly close up, yet without their knowledge. Now with wild-game in open country devoid of fences, hollows, or covert of any description that problem presents initial difficulties that may well appear insuperable. But they are rarely quite so. It is here that the fieldcraft of the leader comes in. He has detected some slight fold that will shelter horsemen up to a given point, and beyond that, screen a crouching figure to within 300 yards of the unconscious *bandada*. Rarely do watercourses or valleys of sufficient depth lend a welcome aid; recourse must usually be had to the reverse slope of the hill whereon the bustards happen to be. Without a halt, the party ride round till out of sight. At the farthest safe advance, the guns dismount and proceed to spread themselves out—so far as possible in a semicircle—around the focal point.[1] At 80 yards apart, each lies prone on earth, utilising such shelter

[1] The horses, if ground permits, may be utilised as "stops" to extreme right and left of the drive, otherwise they must be concealed in some convenient hollow in charge of a boy or two.

(1) AS HATCHED.

(2) AT TWENTY DAYS OLD.

(3) AT ONE MONTH.

Slender-billed Curlew (Numenius tenuirostris).

[*See* Chapter on "Bird-life," *infra*.]

(if any) as may exist on the naked decline—say skeleton thistles, a tuft of wild asparagus, or on rare occasion some natural bank or tiny rain-scoop.

Having now succeeded in placing his guns unseen and within a fatal radius, the leader may congratulate himself that his main object has been achieved. On the nearness of the line to the game, and on his correct diagnosis of the bustards' flight depends the issue.

[It may be added that bustard are occasionally found in situations that offer no reasonable hope of a successful drive. It may then (should no others be known within the radius of action) become advisable gently to "move" the inexpugnable troop; remembering that once these birds realise that they are being "driven," the likelihood of subsequently putting them over the guns has enormously decreased. There accrues an incidental advantage in this operation, for after "moving" them to more favouring ground, it will not be necessary to line-up the guns quite so near as is usually essential to success. For bustards possess so strong an attachment to their *querencias*, or individual haunts, that they may be relied upon, on being disturbed a second time, to wing a course more or less in the direction of their original position. We give a specific instance of this later.

Each pack of bustard has its own *querencia*, and will be found at certain hours to frequent certain places. This local knowledge, if obtainable, saves infinite time and vast distances traversed in search of game whose approximate positions, after all, may thus be ascertained beforehand.]

Now we have placed our guns in line and within that short distance of the unsuspecting game that all but assures a certain shot. We cannot, let us confess, recall many moments in life of more tense excitement than those spent thus, lying prone on the gentle slope listening with every sense on stretch for the cries of the galloping beaters as in wild career they urge the huge birds towards a fatal course. Before us rises the curving ridge, its summit sharply defined against an azure sky—azure but empty. Now the light air wafts to our ear the tumultuous pulsations of giant wings, and five seconds later that erst empty ether is crowded with two score huge forms. What a scene—and what

commotion as, realising the danger, each great bird with strong and laboured wing-stroke swerves aside. One enormous *barbon* directly overhead receives first attention: a second, full broadside, presents no more difficulty, and ere the double thuds behind have attested the result, we realise that a third, shying off from our neighbour, is also "our meat." This has proved one of our luckier drives, for the *bandada*, splitting up on the centre, offered chances to both flanks of the blockading line—chances which are not always fully exploited.

We have stated, earlier in this chapter, that among the various component factors in a bustard-drive the actual shot is

SWERVE ASIDE TO RIGHT AND LEFT

of minor importance. That is so; yet truly remarkable is the frequency with which good shots constantly miss the easiest of chances at these great birds. Precisely similar failures occur with wild-geese, with swans—indeed with all big birds whose wing-action is deliberate and slow. Tardy strokes deceive the eye, and the great bulk of the bustard accentuates the deception —it seems impossible to miss them, a fatal error. As the Spanish drivers put it: "Se les llenaron el ojo de carne," literally, "the bustards had filled your eye with meat"—the hapless marksmen saw everything bustard! Yet geese with their 40 strokes fly past ducks at 120, and the bustard's apparently leisured movement carries him in full career as fast as whirring grouse with 200 revolutions to the minute. To kill bustard treat them on the same basis as the smaller game that appears faster but is not.

Bustards being soft-plumaged are not hard to kill. As compared with such ironclads as wild-geese, they are singularly

easily killed, and with AAA shot may be dropped stone-dead at 80 and even at 100 yards. A pair of guns may thus profitably be brought into action.

Bustards seldom run, but they walk very fast, especially when alarmed. Between the inception of a drive and the moment of flushing we have known them to cover half a mile, and many drives fail owing to game having completely altered its original position. Instances have occurred of bustards walking over the dividing ridge, to the amazement of the prostrate sportsmen on the hither slope. Strange to say, when winged they do not make off, but remain where they have fallen, and an old male will usually show fight. Of course if left alone and out of sight a winged bustard will travel far.

In weight cock-bustard vary from, say, 20 to 22 lbs. in autumn up to 28 to 30 lbs. in April. The biggest old males in spring reach 33 and 34 lbs., and one we presented to the National Collection at South Kensington scaled 37 lbs. The breast-bone of these big birds is usually quite bare, a horny callosity, owing to friction with the ground while squatting, and the heads and necks of old males usually exhibit gaps in their gorgeous spring-plumage — indicative of severe encounters among themselves. Hen-bustard seldom exceed 15 lbs. at any season.

Bustard are usually found in troops varying from half-a-dozen birds to as many as 50 or 60, and in September we have seen 200 together.

Bustard-shooting — by which we mean legitimate driving during the winter months, September to April — is necessarily uncertain in results. Some days birds may not even be seen, though this is unusual, while on others many big bands may be met with. Hence it is difficult to put down an average, though we roughly estimate a bird a gun as an excellent day's work. A not unusual bag for six guns will be about eight head; but we have a note of two days' shooting in April (in two consecutive years) when a party of eight guns, all well-known shots, secured 21 and 22 bustard respectively, together with a single lesser bustard on each day. This was on lands between Alcantarillas and Las Cabezas, but it is fair to add that the ground had been carefully preserved by the owner and the operation organised regardless of expense.

A minor difficulty inherent to this pursuit is to select the

precise psychological moment to spring up to shooting-position. This indeed is a feature common to most forms of wild-shooting —such as duck-flighting, driving geese or even snipe; in fact there is hardly a really wild creature that can be dealt with from a comfortable position erect on one's legs. Imagine partridge-shooters at home, instead of standing comfortably protected by hedge or butt, being told to hide themselves on a wet plough or bare stubble. Here, in Spain, it may also be necessary to conceal the gun under one's right side (to avoid sun-glints), and that also loses a moment.

All one's care and elaborate strategy is ofttimes nullified through the blunders of a novice. Some men have no more sense of concealment than that fabled ostrich which is said to

BUSTARDS PASSING FULL BROADSIDE

hide its head in the sand (which it doesn't); others can't keep still. These are for ever poking their heads up and down or—worse still—trying to see what is occurring in front. We may conclude this chapter with a hint or two to new hands.

Never move from your prone position till the bustard are in shot, and after that, not till you are sure the whole operation is complete. There may yet be other birds enclosed though you do not know it.

Never claim to have wounded a bustard merely because it passed so near and offered so easy a shot that you can't believe you missed it. You did miss it or it would be lying dead behind.

All the same keep one eye on any bird you have fired at so long as it remains in view. Bustards shot through the lungs will sometimes fly half a mile and then drop dead.

Wear clothes suited, more or less, to environment—*greenish*, we suggest, for choice—but remember that immobility is tenfold more important than colour. A pure white object that is quiescent is overlooked, where a clod of turf that *moves* attracts instant attention.

In spring, when bustards gorge on green food, gralloch your victims at once, otherwise the half-digested mass in the crop quickly decomposes and destroys the meat.

Here is an example of an error in judgment that practically amounted to a blunder. Before our well-concealed line stood a grand pack, between thirty and forty bustard beautifully "horse-shoed," and quite unconscious thereof. Momentarily we expected their entry—right in our faces! At that critical moment there appeared, wide on the right flank and actually behind us, three huge old *barbones* directing a course that would bring them along close in rear of our line. No. 4 gun, on extreme right, properly allowed this trio to pass; not so No. 3. But the culprit, on rising to fire, had the chagrin to realise (too late) his error. The whole superb army-corps in front were at that very moment sweeping forward direct on the centre of our line! In an instant they took it in, swerved majestically to the left, and escaped scot-free. That No. 3 had secured a right-and-left at the adventitious trio in no sort of way exculpated his mistake.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GREAT BUSTARD (*Continued*)

The following illustrates in outline a day's bustard-shooting and incidentally shows how strongly haunted these birds are, each pack to its own particular locality.

On reaching our point (a seventeen-kilometres' drive), the scouts sent out the day before reported three bands numbering roughly forty, forty, and sixteen—in all nearly a hundred birds. The nearest lot was to the west. These we found easily, and B. F. B. got a brace, right-and-left, without incident.

Riding back eastwards, the second pack had moved, but we shortly descried the third, in two divisions, a mile away. It being noon, the bustards were mostly lying down or standing drowsily, and we halted for lunch before commencing the operation.

During the afternoon we drove this pack three times, securing a brace on first and third drives, while on the second the birds broke out to the side.

Now bustards are, in Spanish phrase, *muy querenciosos, i.e.* attached to their own particular terrain; and as in these three drives we had pushed them far beyond their much-loved limit, they were now restless and anxious to return.

Already before our guns had reached their posts for a fourth drive, seven great bustards were seen on the wing, and a few minutes later the remaining thirty took flight, voluntarily, the whole phalanx shaping their course directly towards us. The outmost gun was still moving forward to his post under the crest of the hill, and the pack, seeing him, swerved across our line below, and (these guns luckily having seen what was passing and taken cover) thus lost another brace of their number.

The bustards shot to-day (January 16), though all full-grown males, only weighed from 25½ to 26½ lbs. apiece. Two months

later they would have averaged over 30 lbs., the increased weight being largely due to the abundant feed in spring, but possibly more to the solid distention of the neck.[1]

This wet season (1908) the grass on the *manchones*, or fallows, was rank and luxuriant, nearly knee-deep in close vegetation—more like April than January. Already these bustards were showing signs of the chestnut neck, and all had acquired their whiskers. The following winter (1909) was dry and not a scrap of vegetation on the fallows. Even in February they were absolutely naked and the cattle being fed on broken straw in the byres.

The quill-feathers are pale-grey or ash-colour, only deepening into a darker shade towards the tips, and that only on the first two or three feathers. The shafts are white, secondaries black, and bastard-wing lavender-white, slightly tipped with a darker shade.

In *Wild Spain* will be found described two methods by which the great bustard may be secured: (A) by a single gun riding quite alone; and (B) by two guns working jointly, one taking the chance of a drive, the other outmanœuvring the game as in plan (A). We here add a third plan which has occasionally stood us (when alone) in good stead.

On finding bustard on a suitable hill, leave your man to ride slowly to and fro attracting the attention of the game till you have had time, by hard running, to gain the reverse slope. The attendant then rides forward, the whole operation being so punctually timed that you reach the crest of the ridge at the same moment as the walking bustards have arrived within shot thereof. Needless to add, this involves, besides hard work, a considerable degree of luck, yet on several occasions we have secured as many as four birds a day by this means.

The great bustard, one imagines, has few enemies except man, but the following incident shows they are not entirely exempt from extraneous dangers. In October, some years ago, the writer purposed spending a couple of nights at a distant marsh in order to see whether any snipe had yet come in. Our course led us through good bustard-country, and by an early start

[1] We know of no other bird that increases thus in weight anticipatory of the breeding-season, nor are we at all sure that it is the swollen neck that explains that increase.

I had hoped to exploit this in passing. Hardly had we entered upon the corn-lands than we espied fifteen bustard, a quarter-mile away on the right. The rough bridle-track being worn slightly hollow and no better cover appearing, I decided to "flatten" on the spot, sending my two men to ride round beyond the game, which, being in a dip, was now below my range of sight. In due course the bustards appeared, winging directly towards me, but alighting in front when already almost in shot. Feeling practically certain of them now, since I could hear the shouts of the beaters beyond, I raised myself slightly, only to see, to my utter chagrin, the bustards flying off in diametrically the opposite direction while simultaneously a hissing sound from behind and overhead caused me to glance upwards. A black object hurtling earthward through space, shot diagonally past me—this I mistook as merely a peregrine pursuing some hare that had been disturbed by the beaters. But on hastening forward over the ridge, I perceived one of the beaters riding up with a dead bustard across his saddle—a female, with a great gaping gash in her side. The beaters reported that just as they flushed the bustard a second time an eagle had swept down upon them, knocked down this one, and sent the rest, scattered in wild disorder, over their heads. Paco had then galloped up to within a few yards before the eagle reluctantly abandoned its prize and sailed aloft. Continuing our interrupted journey, half a mile ahead another pack of bustard was descried, and while rapidly surveying the situation, yet another lot appeared on wing, flying from the right. These last, we instantly concluded both from their direction and also by the curiously unsettled style of their flight, were a part of the band which had recently been attacked by the eagle. Under such circumstances I realised that (though I was mounted and in full view) they might yet pass within shot, so, jumping from the horse, I fired at the nearest old cock-bustard and distinctly saw blood spirt from his snow-white breast. He flew slowly away with ever lowering flight, finally disappearing over a crest close by the scene of our first drive. Confident of gathering him, we

"HURTLING THROUGH SPACE"

rode back, and on gaining the ridge witnessed this amazing spectacle. In the hollow, 300 yards away, was a well with the usual cross-bar and pulley for drawing water, and on the cross-bar sat an eagle. Below on the ground stood the wounded bustard, facing-up to a second great eagle, which kept flapping around him, apparently reluctant to attack so huge a bird on the ground and in its then aggressive attitude, and endeavouring to force it to fly.

So absorbed were both eagles on their quarry that I rode up unnoticed to within 100 yards, and was making ready to fire when the two great birds rose, that from the cross-bar flying away, while the other, not content to resign his prize, circled overhead. In hope that he might descend I concealed myself behind the well, always keeping one eye on the wounded bustard, but presently the eagle had become a mere speck in the heavens. The bustard all this time had remained standing close by, but on my approach it rose quite strongly on wing, and had I not been loaded, might yet have escaped.

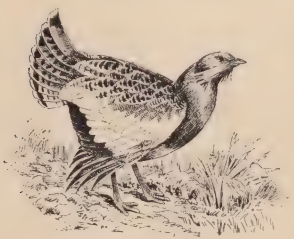
DRAW-WELL WITH CROSS-BAR

The aggressors were imperial eagles, and in their second attack had no doubt realised that the quarry was already wounded. The first victim had been knocked down, stone-dead, when absolutely sound and strong.

During summer these birds practically subsist on grass-hoppers, especially those in the heavy wingless stage known as *Cigarras pinzonas*. These disappear after July, being replaced by smaller and more active varieties, which are equally relished. Once the females commence laying among the spring corn (in April), the cock-bustards assemble in widower packs (*toradas*) on the fallows, and especially on *marismas* adjacent to corn-land. By September both sexes, with the young, reunite on the stubbles, where we have seen as many as 200 together.

It is in April that the old *barbones* attain their full glory and

pride of sexual estate—resplendent in fierce whiskers and gorgeous chestnut ruffs all distended with the seasonal condition. Courtship begins in March, when the weird eccentric performances of the males, flashing alternately white and rich orange against their green environment, lend a characteristic touch to the vernal *vegas*—white specks that appear and disappear as the lovelorn monsters revolve and display, somewhat in the frenzied style of the blackcock on our own northern moorlands. *Hechando la rueda* the Spanish call it, as an old *barbon* majestically struts around turning himself, as it were, inside out before an assembled harem that, to all appearance, takes no manner of interest in his fantastic performance—perhaps the gentler sex dissemble their depth of feeling? Then occur ferocious duels between rival paladins. Long sustained are these and conspicuous afar, albeit not very deadly. No life-blood may flow, but feathers fly ere the point of honour is settled and the victor left in proud possession.



"HECHANDO LA RUEDA"

These combats occur chiefly at break of day while tall herbage yet remains soaked by nocturnal dews, and it occasionally happens that some luckless champion, damaged and bedraggled, and with plumage saturated through and through, when thus encountered, is found unable to fly and so captured. Several such instances came under our notice years ago and—rare though they may be—misled us in *Wild Spain* to conclude that the incapacity arose from a spring-moult—similar to that of wild-geese and of some ducks. That, however, was an error. The loss of flight-power arises, as stated, from the damaged and dew-saturated state of the primaries, as is concisely set forth in a letter from our friend D. José Pan Elberto as follows :—

Many persons undoubtedly believe (owing to bustards being captured in spring unable to fly) that these birds moult all their quills at once. That is not the case; but since in spring, when the male-bustards engage

FIRST ATTITUDE.

SECOND ATTITUDE.

THE SAME, BUT LOOKING UP AT A PASSING BIRD.

FINAL POSITION.

GREAT BUSTARD "SHEWING-OFF"—FROM LIFE.

in continuous fighting, the corn-growth is already quite tall, and in the early mornings all vegetation is saturated with night-dews, it occasionally happens that a bustard may be met with incapable by this cause of taking wing—that is, that some of the flight-feathers are lost or broken and all dew-soaked (*rociadas*). The bustard moults gradually and never loses the power of flight.

While never attaining the size of wild birds, yet bustards thrive well in captivity—always assuming that they have been caught young. Old birds brought home wounded never survive twenty-four hours, dying not from the wound (which may be insignificant) but from *barinchin*, which may be translated chagrin or a broken heart. Young bustards reared thus become

TAIL-FEATHERS OF GREAT BUSTARD

extremely tame, coming to call and feeding from the hand, though when old the males are apt to grow vicious in spring, attacking savagely children, dogs, and even women, especially those whom they see to be afraid.[1] Tame as they are, they are always subject to strange alarms, seemingly causeless. Suddenly they raise their wings, draw in their heads, and dance around, jumping in air, and ever intently regarding the heavens—sometimes dashing off under cover of bushes. One may connect this exhibition with some speck in the sky, some passing eagle, more often no motive is discernible. Bustard-chicks emit a plaintive whistle so precisely similar to that of the kites that (when hatched out under a domestic hen) the foster-mother has been so terrified as to desert her brood. When adult, bustards are usually quite silent, save for a grunting noise in spring—that is, in captivity. But on a hot day we have heard the old males,

[1] We have never succeeded in inducing our tame bustards to breed in captivity.

when passing on a drive, utter panting sounds, and (as already mentioned) a winged *barbon* will turn to attack with a sort of gruff bark—wuff, wuff—as his captor approaches.

So retentive is their memory that each year as May comes round our tame bustards keep constantly on the look-out for the first cart-load of green cut grass brought into the stable-yard for the horses. They even follow it right into the loose-box where it is stored, in order to feast on the grasshoppers it conceals, climbing all over the mountain of grass, but never scratching as hens or pheasants would do.

The Little Bustard (*Otis Tetrax*—Spanish, *Sisón*)

The little bustard may fairly claim the proud distinction that it alone of all the game-birds on earth can utterly scorn and set at naught every artifice of the fowler—modern methods and up-to-date appliances all included. Here in Spain, though the bird itself is abundant enough (and its flesh delicate and delicious), it so entirely defies every set system of pursuit that no one nowadays attempts its capture. Practically none are killed save merely by some chance or accidental encounter.

True, during the fiery noontides of July and August even the little bustard enjoys a siesta and may then be shot. It will, in fact, "lie close" before pointers and cackle like a cock-grouse as it rises from those desolate *dehesas* which form its home—vast stretches of rolling veld where asphodel, palmetto, and giant thistles grow rampant as far as eye can reach. But that scarce comes within our category of sport, since a solar heat that can (even temporarily) tame a *sisón* is quite likely to finish off a Briton for good and all. And with the advent of autumn and a relatively endurable temperature, in a moment the *sisón* becomes impossibly wild. Any idea of direct approach is simply out of the question, but beyond that, this astute fowl has elaborated a scheme—indeed a series of schemes—that nullifies even that one remaining resource of baffled humanity, "driving." You may surround his company, "horse-shoe" them with hidden guns—do what you will, not a single *sisón* will come in to the firing-line. You cannot diagnose beforehand his probable line of flight, for he has none, nor can you influence its subsequent direction. For the little bustard shuts off all negotiation at its initiation by

springing vertically in air, soaring far above gunshot, and there indulging in fantastic aerial evolutions more in the style of wigeon or other wildfowl than of a true game-bird as he is. Thus from that celestial altitude he spies out the country and all terrestrial dangers, finally disappearing afar amidst the wastes of atmospheric space. Frequently we have noticed the high-flying band, after, say, twenty minutes of such display of wing-power, descend directly to their original position at a safe interval after the drivers had passed forward thereof! Thus do they scorn our efforts and add insult to injury.

In practice no *sisónes* whatever are killed in set drives, and

LITTLE BUSTARD
Summer plumage.

for twenty years we have abandoned the attempt as impossible. They nevertheless—alike with every other fowl of the air—must, by occasional mischance, fly into danger, and at such times, owing to their habit of flying in massed formation, a heavy toll may be levied at a single shot by a gunner who is alert to exploit the happy event. We have ourselves, in this casual way, dropped from five to eight *sisónes* with the double charge.

Though frequenting the same open terrain as their big cousins, the *sisónes* distinctly prefer the rough stretches of palmetto, thistles, and other rank herbage to corn-land proper—in short, they prefer to sit where they can never be seen on the ground. Conspicuous as their white plumage and resonant wing-rattle makes them in air, we can hardly recall a dozen instances of having detected a pack of little bustard at rest—and then merely in

quite accidental and exceptional circumstances. And even then (as indicated) the knowledge of their precise position has seldom availed to their undoing.

By April the males have assumed a splendidly handsome breeding-dress. The neck, swollen out like a jargonelle pear, is clad in rich velvet-black, the long plumes behind glossy and hackle-like, and adorned with a double gorget of white. All this finery is lost by August. Thenceforward the sexes are alike save for the larger size and brighter orange of the males, the females being smaller and yellower. They are strictly monogamous, yet the males "show-off" in the same fantastic way as great bustard and blackcock. About mid-May the female lays four (rarely five) glossy olive-green eggs in the thick covert of thistles or palmettos.

In summer the food of the little bustard consists of snails and small grasshoppers, and on the table they are excellent, the breast being large and prominent and displaying both dark and white flesh—the latter, however, being confined to the legs.

CHAPTER XXVI

FLAMINGOES

THE QUEST FOR THEIR "INCUNABULA"

THE flamingo stands in a class apart. Allied to no other bird-form—hardly so much as related—it may be regarded almost as a separate act of creation. Its nesting habits, and the method by which a bird of such abnormal build could incubate its eggs, formed for generations a "vexed question" in bird-life. The story of the efforts made by British naturalists to solve the problem ranks among the classics of ornithology. The marismas of Guadalquivir were early known to be one of the few European *incunabula* of the flamingo; but their vast extent—"as big as our eastern counties," Howard Saunders wrote—and the irregularity of the seasons (since flamingoes only remain to nest in the wettest years) combined to frustrate exploration. First in the field was Lord Lilford—as early as 1856; and both during that and the two succeeding decades he and Saunders (who appeared on the scene in 1864) undertook repeated journeys—all in vain. The record of these makes splendid reading, and will be found as follows:—

A TYPICAL SIGHT IN THE MARISMA

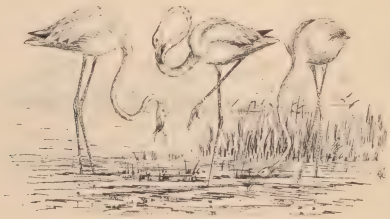
Lord Lilford, "On the Breeding of the Flamingo in Spain," *Proceedings Zoological Society of London*, 1880, pp. 446-50;

Howard Saunders, *ibid.*, 1869, and the same authority in the *Ibis*, 1871, pp. 394 *et seq.*

The late Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria, who visited Spain in May 1879, likewise failed to reach the nesting spot—apparently through the usual cause, not going far enough—though a few eggs were found scattered on the wet mud of the marisma. (Recorded by Lord Lilford as above.)

Thus the question remained unsettled till 1883, when a favouring season enabled the present authors to succeed where greater ornithologists had striven in vain.

A venerable apologue attaches to the nesting habit of the flamingo. Owing to the length of its legs, it was assumed that



the bird could not incubate in the ordinary manner of birds, and that, therefore, it stood astraddle on a nest built up to the requisite height—a combination of unproved assumption with inconsequential deduction. 'Twere ungracious to be wise after the event, yet, in fact, this fable passed current as "Natural History" for precisely two centuries—from 1683, when Dampier so described the nesting of flamingoes on the Cape de Verde Islands,[1] till 1883, when the present authors had opportunity of observing a flamingo-colony in southern Spain.

Flamingoes do not nest every year in the Spanish marismas. Their doing so depends on the season, and only in very wet years is the attempt made. Rarely, even then, are young hatched off, so persistently are the wastes raided by egg-lifters, who sweep up by wholesale every edible thing, and to whom a "Flamingo

[1] Dampier, *New Voyage round the World*, 2nd ed., i. p. 71; London, 1698.

City," with its hundreds of big eggs all massed together—a boat-load for the gathering—represents an El Dorado. As early as 1872 eggs were brought to us—taken by our own marshmen on May 24—but it was not till 1883 that we enjoyed seeing an occupied nest-colony ourselves.

More than a quarter-century has sped since then,. yet we cannot do better than substantially transcribe the narrative as recorded in *Wild Spain.*

During the month of April we searched the marismas systematically for the nesting-places of flamingoes, but, though exploring large areas—riding many leagues in all directions through mud and water varying from a few inches to full three feet in depth—yet no sign of nests was then encountered. Flamingoes there were in thousands, together with a wealth of aquatic bird-life that we will not stop here to describe. But the water was still too deep, the mud-flats and new-born islets not yet sufficiently dried for purposes of nidification. The only species that actually commenced to lay in April were the coots, purple herons, peewits, Kentish plovers, stilts, redshanks, and a few more.

April was clearly too early, and the writer lost nearly a week through an attack of ague, brought on by constant splashing about in comparatively cold water while a fierce sun always beat down on one's head. In May the luck improved. Far away to the eastward flamingoes had always been most numerous, and once or twice we observed (early in May) signs that resembled the first rude beginnings of architecture, and encouraged us to persevere in what had begun to appear an almost hopeless quest.

May 9 (1883).—The effects of dawn over the vast desolations of the marisma were specially lovely this morning. Before sunrise the distant peaks of the Serrania de Ronda (seventy miles away) lay flooded in a blood-red light, and appearing quite twice their usual height. Half an hour later the mountains sank back in a golden glow, and long before noon had utterly vanished in quivering heat-haze and the atmospheric fantasies of infinite space. Amidst chaotic confusion of mirage effects we rode out across the wilderness: at first over dry mud-flats sparsely carpeted with dwarf scrub of marsh plants, or in places bare and naked, the sun-scorched surface cracked into rhomboids and parallelograms, and honeycombed with yawning cattle-tracks made long ago

when the mud was moist and plastic; then through shallow marsh and stagnant waters gradually deepening. Here from a patch of rush hard by sprang three hinds with their fawns and splashed away through the shallows, their russet pelts gleaming in the early sunlight. Gradually the water deepened; "mucha agua, mucho fango!" groaned our companion. Felipe; but this morning we meant to reach the very heart of the marisma, and before ten o'clock were cooking our breakfast on a far-away islet whereon never British foot had trod before, and which was

STILTS DISTURBED AT THEIR NESTING-PLACE

literally strewn with avocets' eggs, while nests of stilts, redshanks, pratincoles, and many more lay scattered around.

During this day we discovered two nests of the slender-billed gull (*Larus gelastes*), not previously known to breed in Spain; also, we then believed, those of the Mediterranean black-headed gull (*L. melanocephalus*), though the latter were afterwards ascribed by oological experts (perhaps correctly) to the gull-billed tern (*Sterna anglica*), a species whose eggs we also found by the dozen.

The immense aggregations of flamingoes which, in wet seasons, throng the middle marismas can scarce be described. Our bird-islets lay so remote from the low-lying shores that no land whatever was in sight; but the desolate horizon that surrounded them was adorned by an almost unbroken line of pink and white

that separated sea and sky over the greater part of the circle. On examining the different herds narrowly through binoculars, an obvious dissimilarity was discovered in the appearance of certain groups. One or two in particular seemed so much denser than the others; the narrow white line looked three times as thick, and in the centre gave the idea that the birds were literally piled upon each other. Felipe suggested that these flamingoes must be at their *pajeréra*, or breeding-place, and after a long wet ride we found that this was the case. The water was very deep, the bottom clinging mud; at intervals the laboured plunging of the mule was exchanged for an easier, gliding motion—he was swimming. The change was a welcome relief to man and

FLAMINGOES AND THEIR NESTS

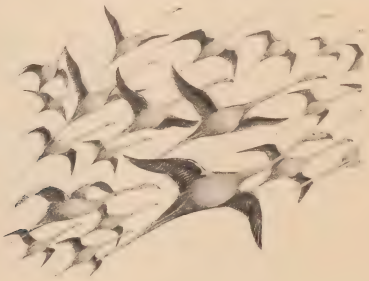
beast; but the labours undergone during these aquatic rides eventuated in the loss of one fine mule, a powerful beast worth £60.

On approach, the cause of the peculiar appearance of the flamingo city from a distance became clearly discernible. Hundreds of birds were sitting down on a low mud-island, hundreds more were standing erect thereon, while others stood in the water alongside. Thus the different elevations of their bodies formed what had appeared a triple or quadruple line.

On reaching the spot, we found a perfect mass of nests. The low, flat mud-plateau was crowded with them as thickly as its space permitted. The nests had little or no height above the dead-level mud—some were raised an inch or two, a few might reach four or five inches in height, but the majority were merely circular bulwarks of mud barely raised above the general

level, and bearing the impression of the bird's legs distinctly marked upon the periphery. The general aspect of the plateau might be likened to a large table covered with plates. In the centre was a deep hole full of muddy water, which, from the gouged appearance of its sides, had probably supplied the birds with building material.

Scattered round the main colony were many single nests, rising out of the water and evidently built up from the bottom. Here and there two or three of these were joined together—"semi-detached," so to speak. These isolated nests stood some eight inches above water-level, and as the depth exceeded a foot, their total height would be two feet or thereabouts, and their



width across the hollowed top, some fifteen inches. None of the nests as yet contained eggs, and though we returned to the *pajeréra* on the latest day we were in its neighbourhood (May 11), they still remained empty. On both occasions many hundreds of flamingoes were sitting on the nests, and on the 11th we enjoyed excellent views at close quarters. Linked arm-in-arm with Felipe, and crouching low on the water to look as little human as possible, we had approached within seventy yards before the sentries first showed signs of alarm: and at that distance, with binoculars, observed the sitting flamingoes as distinctly as one need wish. The long red legs doubled under their bodies, the knees projecting slightly beyond the tail, and the graceful necks neatly curled away among their back feathers

like a sitting swan, some heads resting on the breasts—all these points were unmistakable. Indeed, as regards the disposition of the legs in an incubating flamingo, no other attitude was possible since, in the great majority of cases, the nests were barely raised above the level of the mud-plateau. To sit *astride* on a *flat* surface is out of the question.

Inexplicable it seems that the flamingo, a bird that spends its life half knee-deep in water, should so long delay the period of incubation. For long ere eggs could be hatched, and young reared, the full summer heats of June and July would already have set in, water would have utterly disappeared, and the

flamingoes be left stranded in a scorching desert of sun-baked mud.

Being unable ourselves to return to the marisma, we sent Felipe back on May 26, when he obtained eggs—long, white, and chalky, some specimens extremely rugged. Two is the number laid in each nest. In 1872 we had obtained six eggs taken on May 24, which may therefore, probably, be taken as the average date of laying. There remains, nevertheless, the bare possibility that eggs had been laid before our visit on May 9, but swept up meanwhile by egg-raiders.

The flamingo city "in being" above described was the first seen by ornithologists, and the observations we were enabled to make settled at last the position and mode of incubation of the flamingo.[1]

[1] Dampier's visit to the Cape de Verde Islands took place in September, when, of course, flamingoes would not be nesting.

Science is impersonal, the impulsion of a naturalist springs from devotion to his subject, and from no extrinsic motive —such as personal kudos. Nevertheless, we make this categoric claim for ourselves simply because the credit, *quantum valeat*, has since been (not claimed straight away, but rather) insinuated on behalf of others who didn't earn it—analogous with the case of Dr. Cook and the North Pole.

Where do these thousands of Spanish flamingoes breed, and how do they maintain their numbers, when Spain, three years out of five, is *too dry* for nesting purposes? The only obvious answer is, Africa. And, though incapable yet of direct proof, that answer is clearly correct. For flamingoes are essentially denizens of the tropic zone. The few that ever overlap into southern Europe are but a fraction of their swarming millions farther south. During our own expeditions into British East Africa, we found flamingoes in vast abundance on all the equatorial lakes we visited—Baringo, Nakuru, Elmenteita, Naivasha, and, especially, Lake Hannington, where, during past ages, they have so polluted the foreshores as to preclude human occupation. These were the same flamingoes, a few of which "slop over" into Europe; we shot two specimens with the rifle in Nakuru to prove that.[1]

Flamingoes are not migratory in an ordinary sense—birds born on the equator seldom are. Their movements have no seasonal character, but depend on the rainfall and the varying condition of the lagoons at different points within their range. Here, in Spain, we see them coming and going, to and fro, at all seasons according to the state of the marisma—and a striking colour-study they present when pink battalions contrast with dark-green pine beneath and set off by deepest azure above.

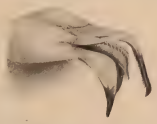
In 1907 flamingoes attempted to establish a nesting-colony at a spot called Las Albacias in the marisma of Hinojos. A mass of nests was already half built, then suddenly abandoned. "If the shadow of a cloud passes over them, they forsake," say the herdsmen of the wilderness.

Quantities of drift grass and weed are always found floating where a herd has been feeding, which at first led us to suppose that their food consisted of water-plants (as with geese), but

[1] We also observed in Equatoria a second species, smaller and red all over, *Phoenicopterus minor*. This, however, was far less numerous; the great bulk of East-African flamingoes were the common *Ph. roseus*.

Flamingoes on their Nests.

that is not the case. The floating grasses are only incidentally uprooted by the birds while delving in the mud. The Spanish marshmen say flamingoes "live on mud," and truly an examination of their crops appears to confirm this. But the mud is only taken in because of the masses of minute creatures (*animalculae*) which it contains, and which form the food of the flamingo. What precisely these living atoms are would require both a microscopical examination and a knowledge of zoophites to determine. The tongue of a flamingo is a thick, fleshy organ filling the whole cavity of the mandibles, and furnished with a series of flexible bony spikes, or hooks, nearly half an inch long and curving inwards. Flamingoes' tongues are said to have formed an epicurean dish in Roman days. However that may be, we found them, on trial, quite uneatable—tough as india-rubber; even our dogs refused the "delicacy." This bird's flesh is dark-red and rank, quite uneatable.



HEAD OF FLAMINGO

Showing the spikes on tongue and lamellae on mandibles.
[The beak had to be forced open.]

In the New World the mystery of the nesting habits of the flamingo (*Phœnicopterus ruber*) was solved just three years later, and in a precisely similar sense.

We will close this chapter with a reference to a recent and most complete demonstration of our subject—that of our namesake, Mr. Frank M. Chapman, of the American Museum, New York, in his *Camps and Cruises of an Ornithologist*. Therein is set forth, in Chapter IV., the last word on this topic. In America, as in Spain, the final solution of the problem was only attained after years of patient effort and many disappointments. With the thoroughness of thought and honesty of purpose that marks our transatlantic progeny while treating of natural phenomena, this book sets forth the life-history and domestic economy of the flamingo, from egg to maturity, illustrated by a series of photographs that are absolutely unique.[1] We conclude by quoting our bird-friend's opening sentence: "There are larger birds than the flamingo, and birds with more brilliant plumage,

[1] It is right to add that in America the growth of mangrove and other bushes, sometimes in close proximity to the nests, offers facilities to the photographer that are wholly wanting in Spain, where the flamingo only nests in perfectly open waters devoid of the slightest covert or means of concealment.

but no other large bird is so brightly coloured, and no other brightly coloured bird is so large. In brief, size and beauty of plume united reach their maximum development in this remarkable bird, while the open nature of its haunts and its gregarious habit seem specially designed to display its marked characteristics of form and colour to the most striking advantage. When to these superficial attractions is added the fact that little or nothing has hitherto been known of its nesting habits, one may realise the intense longing of a naturalist, not only to behold a flamingo city—itself the most remarkable sight in the bird-world—but to lift the veil through which the flamingo's home-life has been but dimly seen."

CHAPTER XXVII

WILD CAMELS

It was during these aquatic rides in search of the nesting-places of the flamingo that we first fell in with wild camels.

Vague yarns, more or less circumstantial, that such animals wandered over the farther marismas, we remember as early as 1872. The thing, however, had appeared too incredible for consideration—at any rate, we gave it none. But in that spring of 1883 we one day found ourselves face to face with two unmistakable camels. They stood gazing intently about half a mile away—a huge, shaggy, hump-backed beast, accompanied by a second not half its size. The pair wheeled and made off ere we had approached within 400 yards, and something "game-like" in their style prompted our first and last attempt at pursuit. The camels simply ran away from us, splashing through slippery mud and water, two feet deep, at double our horses' speed, and raising in their flight a tearing trail of foam as of twin torpedo-boats.

Since then we have fallen in with camels on very many occasions, singly, in twos and threes, or in herds of a dozen to twenty and upwards, old and young together. It is, in fact, only necessary to ride far enough into the marisma to make sure of seeing some of these extraordinary monsters startling the desolate horizon, and silhouetted in incongruous juxtaposition with ranks of rosy flamingoes and flotillas of swimming waterfowl.

The whole story of these wild camels and their origin has been narrated in *Wild Spain*. Briefly summarised, the animals were introduced to Spain in 1829 by the Marquis de Villafranca (House of Medina-Sidonia) with the object of employing them in transport and agriculture, as they are so commonly used on the opposite shores of Africa. But local difficulties ensued—chiefly arising from the intense fear and repugnance of horses towards camels, which resulted in numerous accidents—and eventually

the bactrians were set free in the marisma, wherein they have since lived at large and bred under wholly wild conditions for well-nigh a century.

We admit that a statement of the existence of wild camels in these watery wildernesses of Spain—flooded during great part of the year—is difficult to accept. The camel is inseparably associated with the most arid deserts of earth, with sun-scorched Sahara, Arabia Petraea, and waterless tropical regions. Its physical economy is expressly adapted for such habitats—the huge padded feet and seven-chambered stomach that will sustain it for days without drinking. Yet the reader was asked to believe that this specialised desert-dweller had calmly accepted a condition of life diametrically reversed, and not only lives, but breeds and flourishes amidst knee-deep swamp.

At the period of which we write the camel was not known to exist on earth in a wild state, and physical disabilities were alleged which would have precluded such a possibility. During historic times it had never been described save only as a beast of burden, the slave of man—and a savage, intractable slave at that. A little later, however, the Russian explorer, Prejevalsky, met with wild camels roaming over the Kumtagh deserts of Turkestan, and in Tibet Sven Hedin has since shown the two-humped camel to be one of the normal wild beasts of the Central Asian table-lands.

Wild camels in Europe represented a considerable draft upon the credulity of readers; and a chorus of ridicule was poured upon the statement. Men who had "lived in Spain for years"—a foreign consul at Seville, engineers employed in reclaiming marismas (somewhere else)—all rushed into print to attest the absurdity of the idea. Limited experience was mistaken for complete knowledge! Similar treatment was accorded to our observation of pelicans in Denmark. Ornithologists of Copenhagen insinuated we did not know pelicans from seagulls; yet the Danish pelicans are as well known to the Jutlander fisher-folk as are the Spanish camels to the herdsmen and fowlers of the marisma. Knowledge is no monopoly of high places.

The Spanish camels spend their lives exclusively in the open marisma, pasturing on the *vetas*, or higher-lying areas, and passing from islet to islet, though the intervening water be three feet deep. We have watched them grazing on subaquatic

WILD CAMELS.

herbage in the midst of what appeared miles of open water; and, in fact, during wet winters there is no dry land to be seen. Yet they never approach the adjacent dunes of Doñana, though these would appear so tempting. By night, however, the camels sometimes pass so near to our shooting-lodge that their scent, when borne down-wind, has created panic among the horses, though the stables are situate within an enclosed courtyard.

Antonio Trujillo, formerly head-keeper of the Coto Doñana, some years ago chanced on a camel that was "bogged" in a quicksand (*nuclé*). These places are dangerous, and it was not till six days later that he was enabled, by bringing planks and

ropes, to drag the poor beast to firm land. All round the spot where the camel had laid he found every root, and even the very earth, eaten away. Yet the animal when set free appeared none the worse, for it strolled away quite unconcerned, and shortly commenced to browse while still close by.

Young camels are born early in the year, about February, though whether that is the exclusive period we have no means of knowing.

A curious incident occurred one winter day when we had ridden out into the marisma expressly in search of camels. It was an intensely cold and dry season, almost unprecedented for the severity of the frost. When several leagues from anywhere, a keen eye detected in the far distance a roving fox. All dismounted, and letting the horses graze, hid behind them and awaited his approach. Then with only a single *podenco*, or

hunting-dog, *Frascuelo* by name, after a straight-away run of five or six miles over the sun-dried plain, we fairly rode bold Reynard down and killed him.

Six months after the publication of *Wild Spain* we received the following letter from H.R.H. the late Philippe, Comte de Paris, the owner of the adjoining Coto del Rey :—

June 17, 1893.

Having read with the greatest pleasure and interest your description of the wild camels, it struck me that you may appreciate a photograph taken from nature of one of these independent inhabitants of the shores of Guadalquivir. I found that one could only look at them from a distance, and therefore the enclosed photographs may be of interest. They were taken three months ago by my nephew, Prince Henry of Orleans. My keepers had in the early morning separated this single animal from the herd, but it escaped from them about Marilopez at noon, and when we met with him near the Laguna de la Madre, and about a mile from the Coto del Rey, we had only to give him a last gallop to catch him. These camels spend great part of the year on ground of which I am either the owner or the tenant, and I do my best to protect them from the terrible poachers coming from Trebujena. In order to be able to do this more effectually, I bought yesterday from the heirs of the landowners who turned them out some seventy years ago, I think, all the claims they can have on these animals.

We have recently been favoured by the present Comte de Paris with the latest details respecting the camels. In a note dated August 1910, H.R.H. writes :—

For some time their numbers have been decreasing, and we no longer see great troops of them as we used to do eighteen years ago. The cause of their diminution is certainly the bitter war waged against them by poachers. The parts of the marisma frequented by the wild camels lie between the Coto del Rey on the north, the Coto Doñana on the west, and the Guadalquivír on the south-east. The long deep channels of La Madre, however, interfere with their reaching the Coto Doñana, and they chiefly graze in the marismas of Hinojos and Almonte. The plan pursued by the poachers is as follows :—Coming down from some of the little villages, they cross the river in small flat-bottomed boats in which they can creep along the shores to points where they have seen either the spoor or the animals themselves during the day. Then drawing near to the camels, under cover of the waning light, they are able to kill one or sometimes two, which they skin and disembowel on the spot. The flesh is cut up into pieces, sewn up in the skin, and, on returning to the river-bank, secreted beneath the flat bottom-boards of the boat, thereby evading

detection by Civil Guards and douaniers. The men then sail down the river and sell the meat at San Lucar as venison.

When in the marisma in 1892 I met one day a troop of forty animals—some old males, their huge bodies covered with thick hair like blankets; there were also females followed by their young—fantastic of appearance, owing to the disproportionate length of their legs, but galloping and frisking around their mothers as they had done since birth.

Next day my companion and I took lassoes; we encountered a huge old male, singly, which trotted and galloped round our horses, terrifying the poor beasts to such an extent that we could not come near the camel. At length after a fifty-minutes' chase, in crossing a part where the mud was soft and the surface much broken up by cattle coming to drink, we overtook him. Thanks to my horse having less fear than the other, I was presently able to throw a lasso around the camel, my companion hauling taut the rope to hold the prisoner fast. The great brute proved very active, defending himself with his immense flat feet, which he used as clubs, and, moreover, he bit, and the bite of a camel is venomous. Ultimately I succeeded in getting a second rope around him and dragging him to the ground, where he lay like the domestic camel. The photographs illustrate this episode.

Old males frequently have the hair very ragged and scant, especially on hind-quarters, and on their knees are great callosities. The truly wild camels of the marisma are fast disappearing. A friend has furnished me with the approximate number now remaining absolutely wild, viz. fifteen or sixteen near La Macha fronting the Palace of Tisana, besides five enclosed in the Cerrado de Matas Gordas, near the Palacio del Rey, and belonging to Madame La Condesa de Paris.

It was owing to the rapid decrease in their numbers, and in order to save them from extinction, that the Condesa had these enclosures, known as Matas Gordas, prepared. They contain excellent pasturage, besides some extent of brushwood; yet the enclosed camels do not flourish, nor have they ever bred. Big as the enclosures are, yet the area may be too restricted for them; or it may be the disturbance due to the presence of cattle and herdsmen (since the cerrados are let for grazing) that explains this failure; or possibly the camels resent being enclosed at all. At any rate the spectacle of troops of camels rushing wildly forward in all directions is passing away all too quickly, and soon nothing but the legend will remain.

Truly it is melancholy that the wild camels should be allowed utterly to disappear, representing, as they do, so extraordinary a fact in zoological science.

Our friend Mr. William Garvey tells us that in the summer of 1907, while returning from Villamanrique, crossing the dry marisma in his automobile, he saw three camels. He drove

towards them, and when at 500 or 600 yards, they turned and fled, he put on full speed (sixty miles an hour), and within some ten minutes had all three camels completely beaten, tongues hanging out, unable to go another yard!

This will be the first occasion when wild camels have been run down, in an open desert, by a motor-car!

February 9, 1903.—This morning, shortly after daybreak, a big single bull camel passed my "hide" in the Lucio de las Nuevas within easy ball-shot. He was splashing through water about two feet deep overgrown with samphire bushes, and "roared" at intervals—a curious sort of ventriloquial "gurgle," followed by a bellow which I could still distinguish when he had passed quite two miles away. With the binoculars I distinguished at vast distance five other camels in the direction the single bull was taking.

Here we insert a note received from the co-author's brother, J. Crawhall Chapman :—

Oh, yes! I remember that camel-day—it's never likely to die out of my memory, for never did I endure a worse experience nor a harder in all my sporting life. It promised to be a great duck-shoot on the famous "Laguna Grande"; but for me, at any rate, it began, continued, and ended in misery! At 3.30 A.M., on opening my eyes, I saw Bertie already silently astir—probably seeking quinine or other febrifuge, for we were "housed" (save the mark) in Clarita's *choza*, a lethal mud- and reed-thatched hut many a mile out in the marisma. Nothing whatever lies within sight—nothing bar desolation of mud and stagnant waters, reeds, samphire, and BIRDS, relieved at intervals by the occasional and far-away view of a steamer's funnel, navigating the Guadalquivír Sevillewards.

Well, we arose, looked at what was intended for breakfast, and groped for our steeds. I was to ride an old polo-pony named *Bufalo*, an evil-tempered veteran with a long-spoilt "mouth" that ever resented the Spanish curb. Cold and empty we rode for two long hours in the dark, always following the leader since otherwise inevitable loss must ensue—splosh, splosh, through deep mud and deeper water, never stopping, always stumbling, slipping, slithering onwards. I feared it would never end; and, in fact, it never did—that is, the bog. For when I was finally told "Abajo" (which I understood to mean "get down"), and to squat in a miry place so much like the rest of the swamp that it didn't seem to matter much where it really was—well, it was then only 6 A.M. and horribly cold and desolate.

An hour later the sun began to rise. I had not fired a shot—nor

CAPTURING A WILD CAMEL.

THE CAPTIVE.

WILD CAMELS OF THE MARISMA.

PHOTOS BY H.R.H. PHILIPPE, DUKE OF ORLEANS.

had any of us. As a duck-shoot it was a dismal failure. By eight o'clock the sun was quite hot, so I tried to find a stomach—for breakfast. Failed again; but drank some sherry, and then lay down till noon in decomposing and malodorous reed-mush and mud. Never a duck came near, so shifted my stye to an old dry ridge—apparently an antediluvian division between two equally noisome swamps. Here I tried to sleep, but that was no good, for a headache had set in—possibly the effects of sun and sherry combined! I felt the sweeping wind of a marsh-harrier who had found me too suddenly and was half a mile away ere I could get up to shoot.

At four o'clock I signalled for *Bufalo* to take me back to our hut, distant eight miles, the only guide being that morning's outward tracks.

It was on this ride that there occurred the incident of the day—thrilling indeed had it not been for the headache that left me cheaper than cheap. Having traversed some three miles of mud and water, suddenly I saw ahead the "camels a-coming!"—eleven of them in line, the last a calf, and what a splash they made! Knowing how horses hate the smell and sight of camels, and *Bufalo* being a rearing and uncomfortable beast at best, I felt perhaps unduly nervous. The camels were marching directly across my line of route and up-wind thereof. If only I could pass that intersecting point well before them, *Bufalo*, I hoped, might not catch the unwholesome scent. I tried all I could, but the mud was too sticky. The camel-corps came on, splashing, snorting, and striding at high speed. *Bufalo* saw them quick enough, I can tell you—he stopped dead, gazed and snorted in terror, spun round pirouetting half-a-dozen times, reared, and would certainly have bolted but that he stood well over his fetlocks in mud and nigh up to the girths in water. I could not induce him to face them anyhow; but remember, please, that I was handicapped by the mass of accoutrements and luggage slung around both me and my mount, to wit:—Several empty bottles and bags, remains of lunch, some 500 cartridges, three dozen ducks, a Paradox gun, waders, and brogues!

Meantime the camels passed my front within 100 yards and then "rounded up." Having loaded both barrels with ball, I felt safer, and pushed *Bufalo* forwards—to fifty yards. Then the thought occurred to me, "Do camels charge?" *Bufalo* reared, twisted, and splashed about in sheer horror, and then—thank goodness—the corps, with a parting roar, or rather a chorus of vicious gurgling grunts, in clear resentment at my

presence on the face of the water at all, turned and bolted out west at full speed. I was left alone, and much relieved.

The adult camels were of the most disreputable, not to say dissolute appearance, great ugly tangled mats of loose hair hanging from their shoulders, ribs, and flanks, their small ears laid viciously aback, and with utterly disagreeable countenances. I half wish now that I had shot that leading bull—he would never have been missed! I don't suppose that any one has been nearer to these strange beasts than I was that day; certainly I trust never to see them so near again—never in this world!

. . . . . .

While preparing these pages for press we are grieved to hear of the death of our friend Mr. William Garvey, whose adventure with the camels is narrated above (p. 279). Mr. Garvey, who was in his eightieth year, was a *Gentil Hombre de la Camara* to King Alfonso and had on various occasions, with his nephew, Mr. Patrick Garvey, entertained the monarch on his splendid domain.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AFTER CHAMOIS IN THE ASTURIAS

PICOS DE EUROPA

At the château of Nuévos, hidden away amidst Cantabrian hills, hard by where the "Picos de Europa" form the most prominent feature of that 100-mile range, we were welcomed by the Conde de la Vega de Sella, whom we had met the previous year in Norway, and his friend Bernaldo de Quirós. Our host was a bachelor and the menage curiously mixed; there was a wild Mexican-Indian servant, but more alarming still, a tame wolf prowled free about the house—none too tame either, as testified by a half-healed wound on his master's arm. The bedrooms in the corridor which we occupied had no doors, merely curtains hanging across the doorway, and all night long that wolf pattered up and down the passage outside. My own feelings will not be described—there was an ominous mien in that wolf's eye and in those immense jaws.

Beyond patches of maize and other minute crops grown in infinitesimal fields divided by stone walls and surrounded by woods of chestnut and hazel, the whole landscape surrounding the château was composed of towering grey mountains. It was from this point that with our kind host we had projected an expedition to form acquaintance with chamois, and to see the system of a *montería* as practised in the Biscayan mountains. The month was September.

The first stage—on wheels—brought us to the village of Arénas de Cabrales, where a gipsy fair or *Romería* was raging, affording striking display of local customs and fashion. The girls, handsome though somewhat stalwart, wearing on their heads bright-coloured kerchiefs (instead of, as in Andalucia, flowers in the hair), danced strange steps to the music of a drum and a sort of bagpipe called the *Gaita*. Cider here replaced wine as a beverage, and wooden sabots are worn instead of the hempen sandals of the south.

Maize is the chief crop, and women work hard, doing, except the ploughing, most of the field labour.

The hill-country around belonged chiefly to our host, who was received with a sort of feudal respect. Ancient rights included (this we were told, but did not see enforced) the privilege of kissing all pretty daughters of the estate. The region is primitive enough even for the survival of so agreeable a custom. Such detail in a serious work must appear frivolous by comparison, yet it reflects the *genius loci*.

This was the point at which we had to take the hill.

Our outfit was packed on ponies, and being joined by three of the chamois-hunters, we set out, following the course of the river Cares. This gorge of the Cares, along with its sister-valley the Desfiladero de la Deva, form two of the most magnificent canyons in all the Asturias, and perhaps have few equals in the wider world outside. The bridle-track led along rock-shelves on the hanging mountain-side, presently fallingagain till we rode close by the torrent of the Cares, here swirling in foaming rapids with alternations of deep pools of such crystalline water that trout could be discerned swimming twenty feet below the surface. The water varied between a diamond-white and an emerald-green, according as the stream flowed over the white limestone or rocks of darker shade.

Approaching Bulnes, the track became absolutely appalling, zigzagging to right and left up an almost perpendicular mountain. Riding was here out of the question. It was giddy work enough on foot, rounding corners where the outer rim overhung a sheer drop of hundreds of feet to the torrent below, and with no protection to save horse or man in the event of a slip or false step. Not without mental tremors we surmounted it and reached Bulnes, a dozen stone, windowless houses clustered on an escarpment. This is facetiously called the "Upper Town," and we

presumed that another group of hovels hidden somewhere beneath our sight formed Lower Bulnes.

We entered the best looking of these stone-age abodes, and discovered that it formed the presbytery of the Cura of Bulnes, a strange mixture of alpine hut with Gothic hermitage. Slabs of rough stone projecting from unhewn walls served as tables, while rudely carved oak-chests did double duty as seats or wardrobes in turn. The Cura's bed occupied one corner, and from the walls hung gun and rifle, together with accoutrements of the chase—satchels, belts, and pouches, all made of chamois-skin. At first sight indeed the whole presbytery reeked rather of hunting than of holiness—it is scarce too strong to say it smelt of game. An inner apartment, windowless and lit by the feeble flicker of a *mariposa*, that recalled the reed-lights of mediaeval history (and to which, by the way, access was only gained past other cells which appeared to be the abode of cows and of the cook respectively), was assigned to us.

The Padre himself was away on the cliffs above cutting hay, for he combines agriculture with the care of souls, owns many cows, and makes the celebrated cheese known as "Cabrales." Presently he joined us in his stone chamber, and at once showed himself to be, by his frank and genuine manner, what later experience proved him, a true sportsman and a most unselfish companion. His Reverence at once set about the details of organising our hunt, sent his nephew to round-up the mountain lads, some being sent off at once to spend that night, how, we know not, in crags of the Peña Vieja, while others were instructed to join us there in the morning.

While we dined on smoked chamois and rough red wine he busied himself arranging weapons, ammunition, and mocassins for a few days' work on the crags. Our arrival having been prearranged, we were soon on our upward way, by sinous tracks which lead to the summits of the Picos de Europa, some altitudes of which are as follows: Peña Vieja, 10,046 feet; Picos de Hierro, 9610 feet; Pico de San Benigno, 9329 feet. All heavy baggage was left below; there only remained the tent, rugs, guns, and cartridges, and these were got up, heaven knows how, to about half the required height on the backs of two donkeys. For provisions we relied on the milk and bread of the cheese-makers who live up there, much in the style of the Norwegian peasants

at their *saeters*, or summer sheilings on the fjeld. Hard by the *cabaña*, or cabin, of these honest folks, our tent was pitched—altitude, 5800 feet.

With the first of the daylight, after a drink of milk, we started upwards, our host, the Cura, Bertie, and ourselves.

With us were ten goat-herds who had to flank the drive; the others would already be occupying allotted positions, we knew not where. Three hours' climbing—the usual struggle, only worse—took us to the first line of "passes," far above the last signs of vegetation and amidst what little snow remains here in summer. This "drive" had been reckoned a certainty, and four animals were reported seen in the mist, but no chamois came in to the guns, and yet another two-hours' climb had to be faced ere the second set of posts was reached.

This bit, however, definitely stopped for the moment my career as a chamois-hunter, such was the slippery, perpendicular, and utterly dangerous nature of the rocks. A fortnight before I had climbed the Plaza de Almanzór in the Sierra de Grédos, but these pinnacles of the Picos proved beyond my powers. The admission, beyond any words of mine, bespeaks the character of these Cantabrian peaks. Here on a dizzy ledge at 8000 feet I remained behind, while the rest of the party, filing up a rock-stair, were lost to sight within fifteen yards.

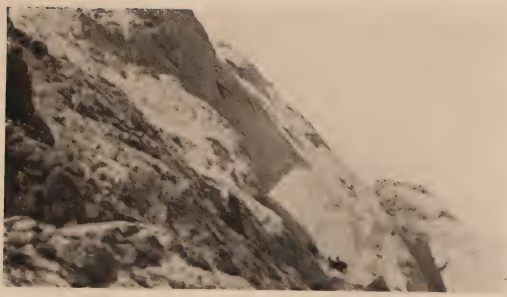
Before me stretched away peak beyond peak in emulating altitudes the whole vast cordillera of Cantabria—a glory of mountain-forms.

> . . . the things which tower, which shine,
> Whose smile makes glad, whose frown is terrible.

In majestic array, pinnacles and crannied summits, flecked and streaked with glistening snows, enthral and subdue. The giants Peña Vieja, Urriales, Garnizo, lift their heads above the rest, piercing the blue ether—fancied spires in some celestial shrine.

This smiling noontide an all-pervading spirit of peace reigns; the sublimity of solitude generates reverence and awe, the voice of the Creator seems audible amidst encompassing silence.

Far away below, as in another world, lie outspread champaigns; sunlit stubbles, newly stripped of autumnal crops, form chequers of contrasted colour that set off with golden background the dark



CHAMOIS FROM LIFE ON LA LLOROSA, PEÑA VIEJA.

EL CORROBLE, PICOS DE EUROPA, ASTURIAS.

THE HOME OF THE CHAMOIS.

Asturian woods, while fresh green pastures blend in harmony with the riant foliage of the vine.

Presently, following my companion, a goat-herd, who had been left with me, by slow degrees we reached the spot appointed to await our party's return.

Hours went by and six o'clock came before, on the sky-line above, they appeared, five of the *monteros* each bearing a chamois on his shoulder. Then, in the 2000-feet ravine towards the north, a third drive was attempted for my special benefit; but the day was far spent, and during the crucial half-hour snow-clouds skurrying along the crests shut out all chance of seeing game. The beaters reported enclosing quite forty chamois, some of which broke downwards through the flankers, the rest passing a trifle wide of the guns. This beat is termed "El Arbol."

Long and weary was the descent, and fiendish places we had to pass ere the welcome camp-fires loomed up through gathering darkness. Those who wish to shoot chamois should commence the undertaking before they have passed the half-century.

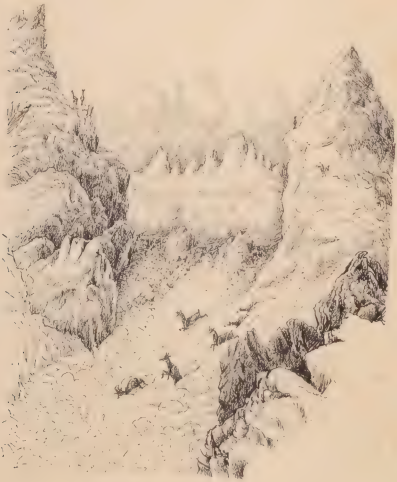
The successful drive that was thus missed by No. 1 is hereunder described by No. 2. We give the narrative in detail, inasmuch as this day's operation was typical of the system of chamois-shooting as practised in the Asturian mountains.

After leaving No. 1 as mentioned, and while proceeding to our next position, a number of chamois were viewed scattered in three groups on the hanging screes of a second gorge, a mile beyond that which we had intended to beat. After consultation held, it was decided to alter the plan and to send the guns completely round the outer periphery of encircling heights so as to command the passes immediately above the game. This involved two hours' climbing and incidentally three detours, scrambling each time down the precipitous moraine to avoid showing in sight of the chamois.

Upon reaching the reverse point, the Conde and I were assigned the most likely posts; and these being also the highest, a final heart-breaking climb up a thousand feet of loose rocks succeeded. Chamois, like ibex, when disturbed instinctively make for the highest ground, hence our occupation of the topmost passes. Cheered on by the Conde, himself as hard as steel, the effort was accomplished, and I sank down, breathless, parched, and exhausted, behind a big rock that was indicated as my position.

The lower passes had meanwhile been occupied by the Padre and by sundry shepherds armed with primitive-looking guns.

On recovering some degree of breath and strength, I surveyed my surroundings. We were both stationed on the topmost arête, in a nick that broke for 80 or 100 yards the rim of a knife-



A CHAMOIS DRIVE—PICOS DE EUROPA

Diagram illustrative of text. Our positions on arête marked (1) and (2); "Cathedral" on right. Valley beyond full of driving mist (passing our power to depict).

edged ridge that separated two stupendous gorges. On my right, while facing the beat, and not 30 yards away, the nick was terminated by a rock-mass perpendicular and four-square as a cathedral tower, that uprose some 100 feet sheer. On the left also rose cliffs though not quite so abrupt. The position was such that any game attempting to pass the nick must appear within 50 or 60 yards—so, in our simplicity, we thought.

Behind us dipped away the long moraine of loose rocks by

which we had ascended; while in front, by stepping but a few paces across the narrow neck, we could look down into the depths of the gorge whence the quarry was to approach, as we feebly attempt to show in diagram annexed.

The panorama from these altitudes was superb beyond words. We were here far above the stratum of mist which enshrouded our camp and the sierra for some distance above it. We looked down upon a billowy sea of white clouds pierced here and there by the summits and ridges of outstanding crags like islands on a surf-swept coast.

Of bird-life there was no sign beyond choughs and a soaring eagle that our guides called aguila pintada (*Aquila bonellii*, immature). There are wild-boar in the forests far below, with occasional wolves and yet more occasional bear.

Hark! the distant cries of beaters break the solemn silence and announce that operations have begun. Almost instantly thereafter the rattle of loose stones dislodged by the feet of moving chamois came up from beneath our eyrie. So near was the sound that expectation waxed tense and eyes scanned each possible exit.

Then from the heights on the left, and already above us, sprang into view a band of five chamois lightly skipping from ledge to ledge with an agility that cannot be conveyed in words. The Conde and I fired simultaneously. The beast I had selected pulled himself convulsively together, sprang in air, and then fell backwards down the abyss whence he had just emerged. So abrupt was the skyline that no second barrel was possible; but while we yet gazed into space the rattle of falling stones right *behind* attracted attention in that direction, and a chamois was bounding across that loose moraine (or "canal" as it is here called) by which we had ascended. He flew those jumbled rocks as though they were a ballroom floor, offering at best but a snap-shot, and the bullet found the beast already protected by a rock. Hardly, however, had cartridges been replaced than three more *Rebecos* followed along precisely the same track, and this time each gun secured one buck.

Note that all these last four animals had come in from our *right*, that is, they had escaladed the "cathedral"; though by what earthly means they could surmount sheer rock-walls devoid of visible crack or crevice passes human comprehension. For

myself, having regarded the cathedral as impassable, I had kept no watch on that side.

For the next half-hour all was quiet. Then we heard again the rattle of hoofs somewhere down under, and on the sound ceasing, had gently raised ourselves to peer over into the eerie abyss in front, when a chamois suddenly poked his head over the rocks within fifteen yards, only to vanish like a flash.

From this advanced position, in the far distance we could now distinguish the beaters, looking like flies as they descended the opposite circle of crests, and could hear their cries and the reverberation of the rocks they dislodged to start the game. An extra burst of clamour denoted game afoot, and a few seconds later another chamois (having once more mocked the cathedral barrier) darted across the moraine behind and fell within a score of yards of the previous pair, though all three were finally recovered several hundred feet below, having rolled down these precipitous screes. The first chamois I had shot had fallen even farther—at one point over a sheer drop that could not be less than 100 feet. His body was smashed into pulp, every bone broken, but curiously the horns had escaped intact. We were much struck by the clear emerald-green light in the eyes of newly killed chamois.

The beaters being now close at hand, we scrambled down to rejoin the Padre who had occupied the *puesto* next below ours. We found that worthy man very happy as he had succeeded in putting two slugs into a chamois-buck, to which the *coup de grâce* had been given by Don Serafin lower down.

A curious incident occurred as we made our way to the next beat where "No. 1" was to rejoin us. Suddenly the rugged stones that surrounded us were vivified by a herd of bouncing chamois—they had presumably been disturbed elsewhere and several came our way. A buck fell to a long shot of our host; while another suddenly sprang into view right under the Padre's feet. This, he averred, he would certainly have killed had he been loaded with slugs (*postas*) instead of ball.

The six chamois brought into camp to-night included four bucks and two does. We had not ourselves found it possible to distinguish the sexes in life, though long practice enabled the Conde to do so when within moderate distance. All six were of

a foxy-red colour, and the horns measured from seven to eight inches over the bend.

Chamois are certainly very much easier to obtain than ibex. Not only are they tenfold more abundant, but, owing to their diurnal habits, they are easily seen while feeding in broad daylight (often in large herds) on the open hillsides. They never enter caves or crevices of the rocks as ibex habitually do.

Chamois might undoubtedly be obtained by stalking, though that art is not practised in Spain. The excessively rugged nature of the ground is rather against it; for one's view being often so restricted, there is danger while stalking chamois, which have been espied from a distance, of "jumping" others previously unseen though much nearer. Driving, as above described, is the method usually adopted. Few beaters comparatively are required; the positions of flankers and stops are often clearly indicated by the natural configuration of the crests.

Dogs are occasionally employed. The game, in their terror of canine pursuers, will push forward into precipices whence there is no exit; and then, rather than attempt to turn, will spring down to certain death.

The best foot-gear is the Spanish *alpargata*, or hemp-soled sandal. They will withstand two or three days' wear on the roughest of rocks and only cost some eighteenpence a pair. Nailed boots are useless and dangerous.

Similar days followed, some more successful, others less, but all laborious in the last degree. Both limbs and lungs had well-nigh given out ere the time arrived to strike camp and abandon our eyrie.

During the descent to Bulnes we noticed a goat which, in feeding along the crags, had reached a spot whence it could neither retreat nor escape, and by bleating cries distinctly displayed its fear. Now that goat was only worth one dollar, yet its owner spent a solid hour, risking his own life, in crawling along ledges and shelves of a fearful rock-wall (*pared*) to save the wretched animal. We looked on speechless, fascinated with horror—at times pulses well-nigh stood still; even our hunters recognised that this was a rash performance. Yet that goat was reached, a lasso attached to its neck, and it was drawn upwards to safety.

This incident occurred on the Naranjo de Bulnes, a dolomite

mountain which stands out like a perpendicular and four-square tower, in the central group or *massif* of the Picos—that known as Urriales. The actual height of the Naranjo is given as 9424 feet, which is exceeded by those of either of the other two groups to east and west respectively. But its abrupt configuration gives the Naranjo by far the most imposing, indeed appalling appearance, far surpassing all its rivals, while its lateral walls of sheer rock, some of which reach 1500 to 2000 feet vertically, long lent this peak the reputation of being absolutely unscalable. That feat has, however (after countless failures), been accomplished, in the first instance by Don Pedro Pidal, Marquis de Villaviciosa de Asturias, who was accompanied in the ascent by Gregorio Perez, a famous chamois-hunter of Caïn.

At Arénas de Cabrales we bade farewell to our kind host, despatched Caraballo with the baggage to Santandér, thence to find his way to Jerez as best he might, by sea; and ourselves drove off through the hills forty miles to the railway at Cabezón de la Sal, there to entrain for Bilbao, Paris, and London.

On August 19, 1881, at a royal *montería* above Aliva and Andara H.M. Don Alfonso XII. recovered the same evening (lying dead around his post) no less than twenty-one chamois. Thirteen more, which had fallen into the abyss beneath, were brought in next morning, and nine others later, making a total of forty-three chamois actually recovered, besides those that had lodged in such inaccessible spots that their bodies could not be reached.

At another royal shoot held 1st and 2nd September 1905 H.M. King Alfonso XIII. killed five chamois, the total bag on that occasion being twenty-three.

The Picos de Europa declared a Royal Preserve

In 1905 the freeholders of those villages in the three provinces of Santandér, León, and Asturias, which lie encircling the Picos de Europa, offered to H.M. King Alfonso XIII. the exclusive rights of hunting the chamois throughout the whole "Central Group." His Majesty was pleased to accept the offer, and in the following year commissioned the Marquis of Villaviciosa de Asturias (the intrepid conqueror of the Naranjo) to appoint guards to preserve the game.

Five such guards were appointed in 1906, their chief being the aforementioned Gregorio Perez, representing the region of Caïn, the other four representing those of Bulnes, Sotres, Espiñama, and Valdeón.

The chamois in the four regions named can be counted in thousands.

TYPES OF SPANISH BIRD-LIFE

HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*)

The crest normally folds flat, backwards (as shown at p. 69), but at intervals flashes upright like a halo.

CHAPTER XXIX

HIGHLANDS OF ASTURIAS

(1) THE TROUT IN SPAIN

THE Asturian Highlands—a maze of mist-wreathed mountains forested with birch and pine, the home of brown bear and capercaillie, and on whose towering peaks roam herds of chamois by hundreds—form a region distinct from the rest of Spain.

Rushing rivers and mountain-torrents coursing down each rent in those rock-ramparts attracted our earliest angling ambitions. Some of those efforts—with rod and gun—are recorded in *Wild Spain*, and we purpose attempting no more—whether with pen or fly-rod. For the Spanish trout is given no sort of sporting chance, and lovely streams—a very epitome of trouting-water—that might make the world a pleasanter planet (and enrich their owners too) are abandoned to the assassin with dynamite and quicklime, or to villainous nets, cruives, and other engines of wholesale destruction with which we have no concern.

Never since the date of *Wild Spain* have we cast line on Spanish waters, nor ever again will we attempt it. Spain which, from her French frontier in the Pyrenees right across to that of Portugal on the west, might rival any European country in this respect stands well-nigh at the foot of the list. Not in the most harassed streams of Norway, nor in her hardest-"ottered" lakes, have the trout so damnable a fate dealt out to them as in northern Spain, and for twenty years we have abandoned it as an angling potentiality—or, to put it mildly, there are countries infinitely more attractive to the wandering fisherman.

The case of the Spanish trout as it stands to-day is summed up in the following letter, dated April 1910, from our friend Capt. F. J. Mitchell:—

> I have tried a great many of the best rivers in northern Spain, and

have come to the conclusion that for angling purposes they have been hopelessly ruined—by dynamite, cloruro, lime, coca, and various other things. There may be deep pools here and there where fish have escaped, but they are very few. If your book is not finished you can put this in, as it is accurate, and may save many a disappointment to the free fisherman.

Farther south, in León and northern Estremadura, are also rivers of first-rate character. The Alagón, for example, with its tributaries, is well adapted for trout—dashing streams with alternate stretches of pool and rapid. These still hold trout in their head-waters among the mountains; but lower down the speckled beauties are well-nigh extirpated.

In this region one frequently observes, not without surprise, evidence of the introduction and acclimatisation of exotic products by old-time Moors—often in most outlandish nooks, wherever their keen eyes had spotted some fertile patch: probably, ere this, that energetic race would have preserved and cultivated the trout! The success of such enterprise in New Zealand and South Africa (it is even promising to succeed under the Equator in B.E. Africa), and indeed in Spain itself (at Algeciras), attests how easily these Iberian waters might be endowed with a new interest and a new value.

Such, however, is existent apathy that, although the local natives (N. Estremadura) were aware of the presence of fish in their rivers, and told us that some ran to 10 or 12 lbs. in weight (these were barbel), yet they knew no distinctive names for the various species. All fish, big or little, were merely *peces—Muy buenas peces.* None could describe them, whether as to appearance or habit, nor did they know whether some species were migratory or otherwise.

The only angling we have seen practised in this province was at Trujillo, where in some lakes adjoining that old-world city *Tencas* (we presume tench) up to 5 or 6 lbs. are taken with bait.

(2) Salmon

To such an extent used these to abound in Asturian streams that maid-servants stipulated on entering domestic service that they should not be given salmon more than twice a week. At the present day the pollution of rivers by coal-mining and other impurities has in some cases banished the salmon entirely, in

others greatly reduced their numbers. There yet remain, nevertheless, rivers in Asturias (such as the Deva and Cares) where salmon abound, and where numbers are still caught—chiefly by net, though rod-fishing is gradually extending its popularity, "owing to the glorious emotions it excites."

A local method deserves a word of description. In the crystal-clear waters of N. Spain salmon are regularly captured by expert divers. Its exact position having been marked, the diver, swimming warily up from behind, slips a running noose over the salmon's head. The noose draws tight as the fish begins to run; an attached line is then hauled upon by a second fisherman on the bank.

The Marquis de Villaviciosa de Asturias writes us:—

It is a common practice with the fishermen to dive and capture salmon in their arms (*á brazo*). My grandfather, the Marquis de Camposagrado, caught twelve thus in a single morning in the river Nalon in Asturias.

(3) Bear-Hunting in Asturias

To the same nobleman (one of the first sportsmen of Spain) we are indebted for the following note:—

As regards the chase of the bear in Asturias, where I have killed four, I may say that it commences in September, at which period the bears are in the habit of descending nightly from the higher mountain-forests to the lower ground in order to raid the maize-fields in the valleys. Expert trackers, sent out at daybreak, spoor the bear right up to whichever covert he may have entered, and from which no further tracks emerge beyond.

The locality at which the animal has laid up being thus ascertained, a *montería* (mountain-drive) is organised—the beaters being provided with crackers, empty tins, hunting-horns, and every sort of ear-splitting engine—even the services of the bagpiper[1] are requisitioned!

Three or four guns are usually required, and are posted along the line where the bear is most likely to break—such as where the forest runs out to a point; or where it is narrowed by some projecting spur of precipitous rocks; or a deep valley where the covert is flanked by a mountain-torrent that restricts and defines the probable line of escape.

The bear (which is in the habit of attacking and destroying much

[1] *Gaitero* is the word used. The *gaita* is a musical instrument which we may translate as bagpipes.

cattle) comes crashing through the brushwood, breaking down all obstacles, and giving ample notice by the noise of his advance. If wounded he will attack the aggressor; but otherwise bears only become dangerous when they have young or are hurt in some way. The picturesque nature of these mountain-forests lends a further fascination to the chase of the bear in Asturias. From twenty to thirty bears are killed here every year.

The following quaint paragraphs we extract from Spanish newspapers :—

Fight with a Bear.—In the mountains of the Province of Lerida (Catalonia) a bear last week attacked and overpowered a muleteer, intending to devour him. A shepherd who happened to be in the neighbourhood, though at some little distance, witnessed the occurrence. Hastening with his utmost speed to the spot, he threw himself between the bear and its victim; and after a prolonged and strenuous combat (*lucha larga y esforzada*), the shepherd succeeded with his lance (*garrocha*) in killing the savage beast (*fiera*).

In his gratitude, the muleteer desired to present the shepherd with the best horse of his cavalcade, but this the latter declined.—*November* 24, 1907.

Incursion of a Bear.—In the outskirts of the village of Parámo in the Province of Oviedo (Asturias) there has within the last few days made its presence felt an immense bear which continued to execute terrible destruction among the cattle belonging to the villagers. Fortunately the parish-priest, who is an expert shot, succeeded in killing the depredator. It weighed 140 kilograms (= 300 lbs.).—*April* 25, 1908. [Two others are recorded to weigh 400 and 440 lbs.]

Chase of a She-Bear.—Santandér, *February* 1909. From Molledo an assemblage of the local peasantry, mustered for the purpose, and bearing every kind of weapon, sallied forth, to give battle to a bear which for some weeks had been working havoc among their flocks and herds. After traversing the mountains in all directions without result, they were already returning, dead-beat and disappointed, towards their village, when they suddenly descried the bear standing in the entrance to a cave. On observing the presence of hunters, the animal disappeared within. A shepherd named Melchor Martinez at once followed, penetrating the interior of the cavern which extends far into the mountain-side. Presently on indistinctly perceiving (*divisando*) the beast, Melchor gave it a shot—flying out himself with hair all standing on end (*encrespados*) at the roaring of the wild beast (*fiera*). Melchor, nevertheless, at once entered the den again and fired a second shot—jumping out immediately thereafter. After a short interval, the roars of the *fiera* within having ceased, the hunters in a body entered the cavern and found an enormous she-bear lying dead, together with four young, alive, which they carried away.

(Bravo, Melchor Martinez!)

(4) Game-Birds of Cantabria

Alike in its game-denizens with other physical features, Cantabria is differentiated from the rest of Spain, approximating rather to a north-European similitude. Thus the capercaillie is spread along the whole Biscayan range though nowhere numerous, and in appearance less so than in fact, owing to the density of these mountain-forests.

During our long but fruitless rambles after bear we raised but four: that, however, was in spring when these birds are apt to lie close.

In the Pyrenees (where the capercaillie is known as *Gallo de Bosque*) a certain number are shot every winter along with roebuck and pig in mountain-drives (*monterías*): but in the Asturias the pursuit of the *Gallo de Monte* is effected (as in Austria and northern Europe) during its courting-season in May. The system is well known. The opportunity occurs at dusk and dawn, the stalker advancing while the lovelorn male sings a frenzied epithalamium, halting instantly when the bird becomes silent.

Ptarmigan are found in the Pyrenees, but seem to extend no farther west than the Province of Navarre, which area also coincides roughly with the southern distribution of the hazel-grouse (*Tetrao bonasia*) though we had some suspicion (not since confirmed) that the latter may extend into Asturias.

Our common grey partridge, unknown in S. Spain, occurs all along the Cantabrian highlands up to, but not beyond, the Cordillera de León. Here it descends to the foothills in winter, but is never found on the plains.

A bird peculiar to this region, though not game, deserves remark, the great black woodpecker, a subarctic species which we have observed in the Picos de Europa.

Angling in River and Sea[1]

Nearly all the Spanish rivers when they leave the sierras and dawdle through the plains degenerate into sluggish mud-charged streams; but most of them are well stocked with barbel, which may be caught by methods similar to those in vogue on the Thames, *i.e.* by float-fishing or ledgering with fine but strong tackle, as the first rush of a barbel is worthy of a trout. These

[1] For notes on these subjects, we are indebted to Mr. Carl D. Williams.

fish average about one pound in weight, but in favourable spots, such as mill-tails, run up to 10 lbs. and upwards.

The Spanish barbel has developed one trait in advance of its English cousins, for it will rise to a fly, or at least to a grasshopper. Owing to the abundance of these insects and of crickets along the river-banks in summer, the barbel have acquired a taste for such delicacies, and a hot June afternoon in Andalucia may be worse spent than in "dapping" beneath the trees that fringe the banks of Guadalete and similar rivers.

The *Boga*, a little fish of the roach or dace family, seldom exceeding a quarter pound, will afford amusement in all the smaller trout-streams of Spain and Portugal when trout are recusant. The *boga* is lured with a worm-tail (on finest gut and smallest hook) from each little run or cascade, whence five or six dozens may be extracted in an afternoon.

The Grey Mullet (Spanish, *Lisa*) is a good sporting fish ranging from half a pound up to four pounds weight, and caught readily in tidal rivers as it comes up from sea on the flood. Native anglers are often very successful, using long roach-poles and gear similar to that of the roach-fisher at home. The bait is either lugworm or paste, and on favouring days as many as two dozen mullet are landed during the run of the flood-tide.

The Shad (Spanish, *Sabalo*), though not only the handsomest but also the best-eating of all tidal-river fish, is of no concern to the angler, since it refuses to look at lure of any kind.

The Tunny (Spanish, *Atun*) frequents the south-Spanish coasts and comes in millions to the mouths of the big rivers (especially the Guadalquivír) to spawn. The usual method of capture is by a huge fixed net called the *almadrava*, extending three miles out to sea, and placed at such an angle to the coast-line that the fish, on striking it, follow along to the inshore end, where they enter a *corral* or enclosed space about an acre in extent. Here the fishing-boats lie waiting, and when as many as 500 huge tunnies (they average 300 lbs. apiece) are enclosed at once, a scene of wild excitement and bloodshed ensues, the great fish darting and splashing around their prison, sending spray flying mast-high, while the fishermen yell and gaff and harpoon by turns.

The most successful *almadrava* is situate at Rota, some seven miles south of the mouth of Guadalquivír, the average catch for the season (May 1 till August 1) being about 20,000 tunnies. A

canning factory stands on the shore hard by, where the fish are boiled, potted, and shipped to Italy, whence (the tins being labelled "Italian Tunny") they are exported to all parts of the world! The flesh resembles veal, and is much appreciated in South America.

Rod-Fishing for Tunny

At this period, when the tunny go to spawn (exclusively larger fish), they travel, as the Spaniards say, with their mouths shut, and nothing will induce them to look at a bait. There occurs, however, in winter (November to February) another "run" of smaller fish averaging 50 to 150 lbs. apiece, and these are amenable to temptation. Tarifa, in the Straits of Gibraltar, is a favourable point from which to attempt this sport. The system is to cruise about in a falucho, or sailing-boat, carrying a plentiful supply of sardines, mackerel, and other small fish to serve as bait. These, on arrival at likely waters, are thrown overboard one by one till at length they attract a roving tunny. The operation is repeated till the quarry is enticed close up to the vessel. A similar fish, impaled on a two-inch hook, is then offered him, dangling on the surface, and will probably be seized. The tunny on finding himself held, makes off in a bee-line at a mile a minute. Needless to say, the strongest tackle must be used, together with some hundreds of yards of line, and the fight will be severe and prolonged, for the tunny is one of the swiftest and most active of fish, and he weighs as much as an average man. Few amateurs have hitherto attempted this sport; but as large numbers of tunny are caught thus by professional fishermen with extremely coarse hand-lines, there seems to be no reason why "big-game fishing" in Spain, if scientifically pursued, might not rival that of California.

The Bonito is another fine game-fish which may be caught at sunrise at nearly any point on the Andalucian sea-board by trolling with a white fly.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SIERRA NEVÁDA

The Sierra Neváda with its striking skylines, crisp and clean-cut against an azure background, is yearly surveyed by thousands of tourists in southern Spain. The majority content themselves with the distant view from the battlements of Alhambra or from the summer-palace of Generalife. Few penetrate the alpine solitude or scale peaks that look so near yet cost some toil to gain.

We are not ashamed to admit that these glorious sierras have in themselves possessed for us attractions that transcend in interest the accumulated art-treasures, the store of historic and legendary lore that illumine the shattered relics of Moslem rule—of an Empire City where during seven centuries the power and faith of the Crescent dominated south-western Europe and the focal point of mediaeval culture and chivalry. None, nevertheless, can long sojourn in Granada wholly uninfluenced by its stirring past, by the pathetic story of the fall of Moorish dominion, and the words graven on countless stones till they seem to represent the very spirit of this land, the words of the founder, King Alhama: LA GALIB ILLA ALLAH = Only God is Victor.

Abler pens have portrayed these things, and we will only pause to touch on one dramatic episode—since its scene lies on our course to the "high tops"—when Boabdil, last of the Caliphs, paused in his flight across the *vega* to cast back a final glance at the scene of his former greatness and lost empire. "You do well," snarled Axia, his mother, "to weep over your kingdom like a woman since you could not defend it like a man." That the maternal reproach was undeserved was proved by Boabdil's heroic death in battle, thirty years later, near Fez.[1]

[1] Boabdil, we read, was a keen hunter, and during his sojourn at Besmer frequently spent weeks at a time among the mountains with his hawks and hounds.

From this spot—still poetically called El Ultimo Suspiro del Moro—the Sierra Neváda stretches away some forty miles to the eastward with an average depth of ten miles, and includes within that area the four loftiest altitudes in all this mountain-spangled Peninsula of Spain. The chief points in the Pyrenees, nevertheless, run them fairly close, as shown in the following table:—

GREATEST ALTITUDES IN FEET

Sierra Neváda.		*Pyrenees.*	
Mulahacen . . .	11,781	Pico de Nethou . .	11 168
Picacho de la Veleta .	11,597	Monte de Posets . .	11,046
Alcazába . . .	11,356	Monte Perdido . .	10,994
Cerro de los Machos .	11,205		
Col de la Veleta . .	10,826		

By way of comparison it may be added that the next greatest elevations in Spain are:—

Picos de Europa (described in Chap. XXVIII.) . . .	10,046 feet
Sierra de Grédos (already described)	8,700 „

Curiously all the loftiest elevations occur outside the great central table-lands of Spain, the highest point of which latter is the last-quoted Sierra de Grédos.

Adjoining the Sierra Neváda on the south, and practically filling the entire space between it and the Mediterranean, lie the Alpuxarras, covering some fourteen miles by ten. The Alpuxarras are of no great elevation (4000 to 5000 feet), and are separated from their giant neighbours by the Valle de Lecrin, the entrance to which bears the poetic name of El Ultimo Suspiro del Moro, as just described.

Here is a Spanish appreciation of Neváda:—

Compare this with northern mountains—Alps or Pyrenees: the tone, the colours, the ambient air differentiate this southern range. Snow, it is true, surmounts all alike, but here the very sky flashes radiant (*rutilante*) in its azure intensity contrasted with the cold blue of glacier-ice. Here, in lower latitude, the rocks appear rather scorched by a torrid sun than lashed by winter rain and hibernal furies. The valleys present a semi-tropical aspect, resulting from the industry of old-time Moors, who, ever faithful to the precepts of the Koran, introduced every such species of exotic fruit or herb as was calculated to flourish and enrich the land.[1]

The main chain of the Sierra Neváda constitutes one of the

[1] *La Alpujarra*, by Don Pedro A. de Alarcón (4th edition, Madrid, 1903).

strongholds of the Spanish ibex; and, curiously, the ibex is the solitary example of big game that these mountains can boast. Differing in geological formation from other mountain-systems of southern Spain, the Sierra Neváda shelters neither deer of any kind—red, fallow, or roe—nor wild-boar. The ibex, on the other hand, must be counted as no mean asset, and though

LAMMERGEYER (*Gypaëtus barbatus*)
A glorious denizen of Sierra Neváda.

totally unprotected, they yet hold their own—a fair average stock survives along the line of the Veleta, Alcazába, and Mulahacen. This survival is due to the vast area and rugged regions over which (in relatively small numbers) the wild-goats are scattered; but even more so to the antiquated muzzle-loading smooth-bores hitherto employed against them. That moment when cheap, repeating cordite rifles shall have fallen into the hands of the mountain-peasantry will sound the death-knell of the ibex.

While writing the above we hear (from two sources) that the "Mauser" has at last got into the hands of at least one local goat-herd, who last summer killed four out of a band of five ibex —all sexes and sizes. There is no mistaking the import of this. It signifies that the end is in view unless prompt measures are taken to save the ibex of Nevada from extirpation.

So long as local hunters were restricted to their old ball-guns, the contest was fairly equal and the game could hold its own. But neither ibex nor any other wild beast on earth can withstand *FREE* shooting (unlicensed and unlimited) with 1000-yard "repeaters." Personally the writer regards the use of repeating-rifles on game as sheer barbarism. These are military weapons, and should be excluded from every field of sport.

A precisely analogous case is afforded by Norway and her reindeer. The Mauser first appeared there in 1894. Three years later we pointed out, both to the Norwegian Government and also in *Wild Norway*, that unless steps were taken to regulate and limit the resultant massacre, the wild reindeer would be extinct within five years. Our warnings passed unheeded; but the prediction erred only on the side of moderation. For only four years later (in 1901) the Norsk Government was forced to *prohibit absolutely* all shooting for a period of seven years, and to impose, on the expiry of that time, both licence-duties and limits, alike on native as well as on foreign sportsmen.

Free shooting, unregulated and unlimited, means with modern weapons instant extermination—a matter of a few years. Then, after some creature has perished off the face of the earth, we read a gush of maudlin regret and vain disgust. It is too late; why do not these good folk bestir themselves while there is time to safeguard creatures that yet survive, though menaced with deadly danger? Warnings such as ours pass unnoticed, and platonic tears are bottled-up for posthumous exhibition.

In winter the ibex are driven downwards by the snow. They first descend southwards to the Trevenque—one of those abruptly peaked mountains that "stretch out" even skilled climbers to conquer. A long knife-edged ridge is Trevenque, culminating in a sheer pyramidal aiguille, its flanks scarred by ravines with complication of scarp and counter-scarp, upstanding crags and steep shale-shoots that defy definition by pen or pencil.

A main winter resort is supplied by the Alpuxarras, and, beyond the dividing Valle de Lecrin, ibex are distributed along the whole series of mountain-ranges that lie along the Mediterranean as far as the Sierras Bermeja and Ronda.

Among those subsidiary ranges, the following may here be specified as ibex-frequented, to wit: the Sierras de Nerja and Lujar near Motril, Sierra Tejáda lying south of the Vega de Granada (especially the part called Cásulas, which, with most of the range, is private property and preserved), Sierras de Competa and Alhama, and, nearer the sea, the Sierra Frigiliana belonging to the late Duke of Fernan Nunez, who secured trophies thereon exceeding thirty inches in length.

Westward, in the Province of Malaga, lie the Sierra de Ojen, Sierra Blanca, and Palmitera (a great area of these being now preserved by Mr. Pablo Larios), and last the Sierra Bermeja, described in *Wild Spain*. Several of these ranges are of bare rock, while others are covered to their summits with gorse and other brushwood.

The most enjoyable season for ibex-shooting (and on preserved ground the most favourable) is during August and September, when the snow has practically disappeared, except the permanent glaciers and stray patches in some northern ravines. Camp-life is then delightful and exhilarating and, given sound lungs and limbs, the game may be fairly stalked and shot. The photo shows a typical trophy—a grand ibex ram shot years ago on the Alcazába, horns 28¼ inches—another specimen measuring 29 inches is figured in *Wild Spain*. Our own experiences with ibex, however, are now rather remote and might appear out-of-date. We therefore content ourselves with the following extract from our work quoted.

On a bitterly cold March morning we found ourselves, as day slowly broke, traversing the outspurs of the sierra—on the scene of the great earthquake of 1884, evidences of which were plentiful enough among the scattered hill-villages. Already many mule-teams, heavily laden with merchandise from the coast town of Motril, were wending their laborious way inland. It is worth noting that in front of five or six laden mules it is customary to harness a single donkey. This animal does little work; but always passes approaching teams on the proper side, and, more-

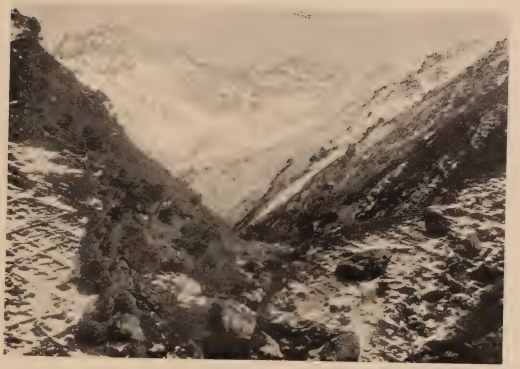
over, picks out the best parts of the road. This enables the driver to go to sleep, and the plan, we were told, is a good one.

At Lanjarón (2284 feet) we breakfasted at the ancient *fonda* of San Rafael, where the bright and beautifully polished brass and copper cooking utensils hanging on the walls were a sight to make a careful housewife envious. We watched our breakfast cooked over the charcoal-fire, and learned a good deal thereby. We were delayed here a whole day by snow-storms. There is stabling under the *fonda* for 500 pack-animals, for Lanjarón in its "season" is an important place, frequented by invalids from far and near. Its mineral springs are reputed efficacious; but the drainage arrangements are villainous in the extreme, and altogether it seemed a village to be avoided. Sad traces of the cholera were everywhere visible, many doors and lintels bearing the ominous sign: it was curious that in so few cases had it been erased.

We left before daybreak, and a few leagues farther on the ascent became very steep and abrupt, the hill-crests whither we were bound within view but wreathed in mist. Only one traveller did we meet in the long climb from Orjiva to Capileira, and he bringing two mule-loads of dead and dying sheep, worried by wolves just outside Capileira the night before. Expecting that the wolves would certainly return, we prepared to wait up that night for them; but were dissuaded, the argument being "that is exactly what they will expect! No, those wolves will probably not come back this winter." But return they did, both that night and several following. The night before we left Capileira on the return journey (a fortnight later) they came in greater numbers than ever and killed over twenty sheep.

Capileira is the highest hamlet in the sierra and is celebrated for its hams, which are cured in the snow. Here we put up for the night, sleeping as best we could amidst fowls and fleas, after an amusing evening spent around the fire, when one pot cooked for forty people besides ourselves. The cold was intense, streams of fine snow whirling in at pleasure through the crazy shutters, so we were glad to go to bed—indeed I was chased thither by a hungry sow on the prowl, seeking something to eat, apparently in my portmanteau.

Heavy snow-falls that night and all next day prevented our advance; but at an early hour on the following morning we were



ALCAZÁBA. MULAHACEN.

THE PEAKS OF SIERRA NEVADA.

NEST OF GRIFFON.

under way—six of us—on mules, though I would have preferred to walk, the snow being so deep one could not see where the edges of the precipices were. No sooner had I mounted than the mule fell down while crossing a hill-torrent, and I was glad to find the water no deeper.

After climbing steadily upward all the morning, the last two hours on foot, the snow knee-deep, we at length sighted the cairn on the height to which we were bound. Before nightfall we had reached the point, but few of the mules accomplished the last few hundred yards. After bravely trying again and again, the poor beasts sank exhausted in the snow, and we had to carry up the impedimenta ourselves in repeated journeys. The deep snow, the tremendous ascent, and impossibility of seeing a foothold made this porterage most laborious, but we had all safely stowed in our cave before sundown.

The overhanging rock, which for the next ten or twelve days was to serve as our abode, we found a mass of icicles. These we proceeded to clear away, and then by a good fire to melt our ice-enamelled ceiling, fancying that the constant drip on our noses all night might be unpleasant. The altitude of our ledge above sea-level was about 8500 feet, and our plateau of rest—our home, so to speak—measured just seven yards by two.

Early next morning we proceeded to erect snow-screens at favourable "passes," wherein to await the wild-goats as they moved up or down the mountain-side at dawn and dusk respectively, their favourite food being the rye-grass which the peasants from the villages below contrive to grow in tiny patches—two or three square yards scattered here and there amidst the crags. It is only by rare industry that even so paltry a crop can be snatched at such altitudes, and during the short period when the snow is absent from the southern aspects. At present it enveloped everything—not a blade of vegetation nor a mouthful for a wild-goat could be seen.

Although during the day the snow was generally soft—the sun being very hot—yet after dark we found the way dangerous, traversing a sloping, slippery ice-surface like a huge glacier, where a slip or false step would send one down half a mile with nothing to clutch at, or to save oneself. Such a slide meant death, for it could only terminate in a precipice or in one of those horrible holes with a raging torrent to receive one in its dark abyss, and

convey the fragments beneath the snow—where to appear next? Each step had to be cut with a hatchet, or hollowed —the butt of a rifle is not intended for such work, but has had to perform it.

Every day we saw ibex on the snow-fields and towering rocks above our cave. They were now of a light fawn-colour, very shaggy in appearance, some males carrying magnificent horns. One old ram seemed to be always on the watch, kneeling down on the very verge of a crag 500 or 600 yards above us, and which commanded a view for miles—though *miles* read but paltry words! From where that goat was he could survey half a dozen provinces.

These ibex proved quite inaccessible, and nearly a week had passed away ere a wild-goat gave us a chance. One night shortly after quitting my post, little better than a human icicle, and not without fear of scrambling caveward in absolute darkness along the ice-slope, a little herd of goats passed—mere shadows—within easy shot of where, five minutes before, I had been lying in wait. On another morning at dawn the tracks of a big male showed that he, too, must have passed at some hour of the night within five-and-twenty yards of the snow-screen.

But it was not till a week had elapsed that we had the ibex really in our power. Just as day broke a herd of eight—two males and six females—stood not forty yards from our cave-dwelling. The fact was ascertained by one Estéban, a Spanish sportsman whom we had taken with us. Silently he stole back to the cave, and without a word, or disturbing the dreams of his still sleeping employers, picked up an "Express" and went forth. Then the loud double report at our very doors—that is, had there been a door—aroused us, only to find . . . the spoor of that enormous ram, the spot where he had halted, listening, above the cave, and the splash of the lead on the rock beyond—*eighteen inches* too low! an impossible miss for one used to the "Express." Oh, Estéban, Estéban! what were our feelings towards you on that fateful morn!

Life in a mountain-cave high above snow-level—six men huddled together, two English and four Spaniards—has its weird and picturesque, but it has also its harder side. Yet those days and nights, passed amidst majestic scenes and strange wild beasts, have left nothing but pleasant memories, nor have their hard-

ships deterred us from repeating the experiment. These initial campaigns were too early in the season (March and April).

The only birds seen were choughs and ravens; ring-ouzels lower down. There were plenty of trout, though small, in the hill-burns. On one occasion a circular rainbow across a deep gorge perfectly reflected in the centre our own figures on passing a given point. The ice-going abilities of the mountaineers were marvellous—incredible save to an eye-witness. Across even a north-drift, hard and "slape" as steel and hundreds of yards in extent, these men would steer a sliding, slithering course at top speed, directed towards some single projecting rock. To miss that refuge might mean death; but they did not miss it, ever, in their perilous course, making good a certain amount of forward movement. At that rock they would settle in their minds the next point to be reached, quietly smoking a cigarette meanwhile. How such performances diminish one's self-esteem! How weak are our efforts! Even on the softer southern drifts, what balancing, what scrambling and crawling on hands and knees are necessary, and what a "cropper" one would have come but for the friendly arm of Enrique, who, as he arrests one's perilous slide, merely mutters, "Ave Maria purissima!"

. . . . . .

Now we have left the ice and snow and the ibex to wander in peace over their lonely domains. To-night we have dined at a *table*; there is a cheery fire in the rude *posada* and merry voices, contrasting with the silence of our cave, where no one spoke above a whisper, and where no fire was permissible save once a day to heat the *olla*. Now all we need is a song from the Murillo-faced little girl who is fanning the charcoal embers. "Sing us a couplet, Dolóres, to welcome us back from the snows of Alpuxarras!"

Dolóres. "With the greatest pleasure, *Caballero*, if José will play the guitar. No one plays like José, but he is tired, having travelled all day with his mules from Lanjarón."

José. "No, señor, not tired, but I have no soul to-night to play. This morning they asked me to bring medicine from the town for Carmen, but when I reached the house she was dead. I find myself very sad."

Dolóres. "Pero, si ya tiene su palma y su corona?" . . . =but as she already has her palm and her crown?

José. "That is true! Bring the guitar and I will see if it will quit me of this *tristeza*!"

Next morning the snow prevented our leaving; and the day after, while riding away, we met some of the villagers carrying poor Carmen to the burial-ground on the mountain-side. The body, plainly robed in white, was borne on an open bier, the hands crossed and head supported on pillows, thus allowing the long unfettered hair to hang down loose below. It was an impressive and a picturesque scene, and as I rode on, the rejoinder of Dolóres came to my mind, "Ya tiene su palma y su corona."

CHAPTER XXXI

IN THE SIERRA NEVÁDA (*Continued*)

ITS BIRD-LIFE IN SPRING-TIME

The long snow-lines of the sierra had vanished behind whirling cloud-masses, black and menacing. The green avenues of the Alhambra seemed gloomier than ever under a heavy downpour, while troops of rain-soaked tourists belied the glories of an Andalucian springtide.

"UNEMPLOYED"
Bee-eaters on a wet morning.

Serins sang in the elms, and wrynecks noisily courted, as we set forth with a donkey-team for the sierra. On former occasions we had explored northwards up the Darro towards Jaën, another year up the Genil, this spring we had selected the valley of the Monachil. Hardly had we entered the mountains than thunder crackled overhead, and then a rain-burst drove us to shelter in a cave. Next day broke ominous enough, but we rode on up the wild gorge of the Monachil, and after seven hours' hill-climbing reached the alpine farm of San Gerónimo, to the guarda of which we had a recommendation. The house nestles beneath the serrated ridge of the Dornájo, 6970 feet.

With some dismay we found assembled at this outlandish spot quite a small crowd of men, women, and children who, with dogs, pigs, hens, and an occasional donkey, all appeared to inhabit a single smoke-filled room. We were bidden to take seats amidst this company, and watched the attempt to boil an

enormous pan of potatoes over a green brushwood fire, while domestic animals (including cattle) passed freely through to the byres beyond. These being on higher ground had created in front a sort of quagmire, which was crossed by a plank-bridge. Rain was falling smartly, and the writer's spirits, be it confessed, sank to zero at the prospect of a week or two in such quarters. Worse situations, however, have had to be faced, and usually yield to resolute treatment. Thus when a separate room—albeit but a dirty potato store—had been assigned to us, trestle-beds and a table set up, the quality of comfort advanced in quite disproportionate degree.

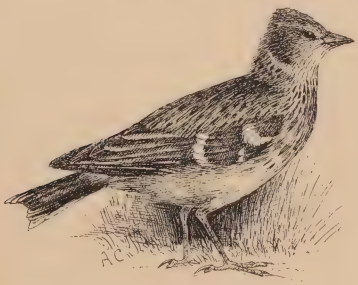
Now the Sierra Nevada with its league-long lines of unbroken snow, accentuated by the mystery of the towering Veleta, massive Mulahacen, and the rest, presents an alpine panorama that is absolutely unrivalled in all the Peninsula. But immediately below those transcendent altitudes, in its middle regions the Sierra Nevada is lacking in many of those attributes that charm our eyes — naturalists' eyes. Over vast areas and on broad shoulders of the hills the winter-snows linger so long that plant-life, where not actually extinct, is scant and starved; while these dreary inchoate stretches are strewn broadcast with a debris of shale and schist that resembles nothing so much as one of nature's giant rubbish tips. True, there exists a sporadic brushwood, exiguous, dwarfed, and intermittent; there are scattered trees, ilex and pinaster (*Pinus pinaster*), up to about 7000 feet. But all seems barren by comparison. One's eye hungers for the deep jungles of Moréna, for the dark-green *pinsapos* of San Cristobal, or the stately granite walls of Grédos. Here all is on a big scale, the biggest in Spain; but size alone does not itself constitute beauty, and the adornments of beauty are lacking. We write of course not as mountaineers, but as naturalists.

It boots not to tell of days when rain fell in sheets and an icy *neblina* swept the hills, shrouding their summits from view. A single ornithological remembrance shall be recorded — the abundance of certain northern-breeding species on the middle heights, especially common wheatears and skylarks. After watching these carefully, we were convinced by their actions (their song, courting, and fluttering flight) that both intended to nest here at 7000 feet, and dissection confirmed that view. Time alone prevented our settling the point; but a month

later (say early in June) an ornithologist could easily verify the fact.

May the 1st broke bright and clear, not a cloud in the azure firmament. The songs of hoopoes, serins, and a cuckoo resounded hard by, and from our paneless window we watched three glorious rock-thrushes "displaying" before their sober mates—as sketched at p. 18. Within sight among the tumbled boulders were also a pair of blue thrushes, with a woodlark or two, several black-starts, and rock-buntings.

We bathed in an ice-cold burn with temperature little above



WOODLARK (*Alauda arborea*)

Nests in Nevada up to 5000 feet, and in the pine-forests of Doñana at sea-level.

freezing—at dawn, indeed, the backwaters were ice-bound. Then, mounted on a donkey, the writer alternately scrambled up the stony steeps or dragged the sure-footed beastie behind. The gentler slopes were fairly clad with yellow daffodil or narcissus, now just coming into bloom, and above 7000 feet we entered a zone of dwarf-arbutus and ilex-scrub. The warm sunshine brought out numerous butterflies—it seemed strange to see these frail creatures fluttering across open snows! Most of those recognised were tortoise-shells, rather paler than our own.

Alas, before noon the icy mists once more swept up. In a crevice among some rocks where we sought shelter at 8000 feet the skeleton of a wheatear attested the cruel conditions of bird-life—death by starvation. Here we separated, the writer going

for a snow-scramble, following the dwindling Monachil to its source, where the nascent river trickles in triple streamlets down black rock-walls mantled by impending snow-fields. Here snow lay in scattered patches dotted with the resurgent unkillable "pincushion" gorse (*Bupleurum spinosum*) and a spiny broom that later develops a purple blossom, and separated by intervals where the melting mantle had left Mother Earth viscous and inchoate, heart-broken at the indignity of eight months in the arctic. Higher up the snow became continuous, but seamed by innumerable rills, each laughing and dancing as in delight at a new-found existence, or converging to join streams in buoyant exuberance.

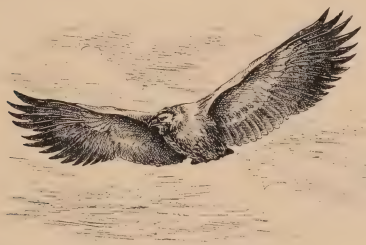
Some leapt forward through fringing margins of emerald moss; others ploughed sullen ways beneath an overhung snow-brae. But no chirp or sound of bird-life broke the silence, the only living creatures were ants and a bronze-green beetle! (*Pterostichus rutilans*, Dej.)—not a sign of those alpine forms we had specially come to seek.

From 8500 feet the snow stretched upwards unbroken (save where some sheer escarpment protruded), covering in purest white the vast shoulder of the Veleta. The Picácho itself was to-day hidden amidst swirling clouds, and only once did we enjoy a momentary glimpse of its great scarped outline. Yet in three short weeks, say by May 20, all these leagues of solid snow will have vanished.

Facing this gorge of the Monachil, the opposite slope is crowned by the conspicuous turreted crags known as the Peñones de San Francisco, 8460 feet. To these L. had climbed, and though we both failed in finding the chief of our special objects (the snow-finch) yet L. had enjoyed a glimpse of another alpine species, new to us, and we decided to revisit the spot on the morrow.

That morning again broke fine, the precursor of a glorious day. Hardly had we left our quarters than a lammergeyer soared overhead, then, gently closing his giant wings, plunged

into a cavern above. Five minutes later he reappeared and, after several aerial evolutions, suddenly checked and, with indrawn pinions, swept downwards to earth. Ere we could surmount an intervening ridge, the great dragon-like *Gypaëtus* swept into view, his golden breast gleaming in the early sunlight, and bearing in his talons a long bone with which he sailed across the valley towards Trevenque; we watched to see the result, but, so far as prism-glasses could reach, that bone was never dropped. Probably he had some special spot habitually used for bone-breaking. Later a griffon-vulture (a species rarely seen in Neváda) passed overhead, and then a second lammergeyer sailed up the gorge of Monachil.



SOARING VULTURE

'Tis a long up-grade grind to the Peñones, but repaid by magnificent views of the Picácho de la Veleta—its scarped outline gloriously offset against the deepest azure and its 1000-foot sheer drop vanishing to unseen depths in the mysterious "corral" beneath—an inspiring scene.

Beyond to the eastward towered the mountain-mass, Mulahacen—perpetuating the name of that Moslem chief whose remains, so tradition records, yet lie in some unknown glacial niche in this the loftiest spot of all the Spains. There they were laid to rest by the fond hands of Zoraya, at the dying request of her husband the penultimate Moorish king, Muley-Hacen.

Our upward course led through beds of dwarf-juniper, thick strong stems all flattened down horizontally by the weight of winters' snows, precisely as one sees them on the high fjelds of

Norway. Here, both to-day and yesterday, we observed ring-ouzels, doubtless nesting amid the dense covert.

We soon picked up our friends of yesterday—small hedge-sparrow-like birds with blue-grey throat, striated back, and red patches on either flank, the alpine accentor. At first they were fairly tame, allowing us to watch and sketch them perched on lowly shrub or rock, warbling a sweet little carol (louder, but otherwise resembling that of our hedge-sparrow), or darting to pick up a straying ant. After a while that confidence, though wholly unabused, vanished: they became wild and cautious, refusing to allow us a single specimen! These birds were evidently paired, but showed no signs of nesting. Alas, that a drawing by Commander Lynes depicting the scene with the Picácho de la Veleta in the background refuses to "reproduce"!

These were the only accentors we saw, nor did we see to-day or any other day a single snow-finch.

An Alpine Farm.—The lands of San Gerónimo (where we were quartered) extend up the Monachil to either watershed—a length of $4\frac{1}{2}$ leagues, while the breadth cannot average less than two. The acreage we leave to be calculated by those who care for such detail. At this date (early May) certainly one-half lay under snow, which still encumbered the higher patches of cultivation—to-day we saw men unearthing last autumn's crop of potatoes well above the snow-line. At lower levels some corn already stood six inches high, but many "fields" were necessarily, as yet, unploughed. Fields, by the way, were separated not, as at home, by hedges, but sometimes by a sheer drop of 500 or 1000 feet, elsewhere by perpendicular rock-faces or by shale-shoots. But the laborious cultivation missed not one level patch—nor unlevel either, since we saw ox-teams ploughing where one wondered if even a cat could maintain a footing.

This is the highest farm in Nevada, possibly in all Spain. The house stands at 6000 feet and the lands extend to the Veleta, 11,597 feet. It provides grazing for goats and sheep, as well as a small herd of cattle, and thus affords permanent employment to several herdsmen. But at seed-time and harvest it employs as many as twenty or thirty men who, with their dependents, live in rude esparto-thatched huts scattered over the whole fifteen miles, and it was the numbers of these (assembled for pay-day)

that had caused us some consternation on our first arrival! The value of the farm, we were told, is put at £8000 Spanish, representing some £400 as yearly rental.

Two years before, wolves had become such a pest to the flocks that strychnine was universally resorted to, with the result that to-day not a wolf is to be seen in the whole sierra. Foxes also perished, and the guarda, Manuel Gallegos, told us that he had thus obtained several wild-cats (*Gatos montéses*) whose skins fetched 20 pesetas apiece as ladies' furs. The following day we chanced on a dead marten-cat, evidently killed by poison; and on showing it to Manuel with the remark that that was *not* a *gato montés*, he replied: "No, señor, that is a *garduño; pero lo mismo da*" = "it's all the same!" Accuracy in definition is not a strong point with Manuel, nor indeed is it with any of our Spanish friends.

GOLDEN EAGLE HUNTING

Martens are the commoner animal in Neváda; there may, nevertheless, be a few true wild-cats, and there certainly are some lynxes. The four-footed fauna of Neváda is sadly limited. There are neither deer of any kind—red, roe, or fallow—nor wild-boar. Bare rocks afford no covert for these: there is, of course, one compensating equivalent in the ibex. Small game is equally conspicuous by its absence. Local *cazadores* (each of whom, of course, possesses a decoy-bird—*reclamo*) enlarge on the abundance of partridge and hares, yet we saw hardly any game whether here on the Monachil, on the Genil, Darro, or at any of the points whereon we have explored the Sierra Neváda. There must, however, be a sprinkling to maintain the golden eagles and peregrines, both of which birds-of-prey we observed.

There were small trout in the Monachil; but in Genil and Dilar (which latter springs from the alpine Laguna de las Yeguas just under the Picácho de la Veleta) trout ran up to a quarter-pound or thereby: the method of capture is dynamite.

Ibex at this season (May) frequent the southern slopes of the main chain—looking down upon the Alpuxarras—a favourite resort being the wild rocks of Alcazába, east of Mulahacen;

but in summer they are distributed along the whole of the "high tops" and are still maintaining their numbers as usual.

We had cherished the hope of meeting with ptarmigan and other alpine forms in these high sierras, especially during our earlier expeditions after ibex. We are satisfied that ptarmigan at least do not exist, having seen no trace of them at any point; but we never saw the snow-finch either, and it is reported to exist in numbers.

Oh! the wearying monotony of that long down-grade ride—the infinity of vast subrounded mountains, all alike, all ugly, all sprinkled rather than clad with low gorse and spiky broom, like millions of pincushions with all points outwards. Then the shale—the very earth seemed disintegrated. Red shale and blue, cinder-grey and lemon-yellow; some schistose and sparkling, the bulk dull and dead. Here and there, amid oceans of friable detritus, stand out great rocks of more durable substance—solitary pinnacles, towers and turrets of fantastic form. Six hours of this ere we reach the *Vega* of Granada.

Ornithology

For ornithologists the following notes on birds observed and not already mentioned may here be inserted:—

Blue and *Rock-thrushes*.—Neither abundant, but the former most so in the rock-gorges of lower Monachil, nesting in "pot holes" and horizontal crevices of the crags. The rock-thrush is more alpine and confined (here as elsewhere) exclusively to the higher sierra.

ROCK-THRUSH

Missel-thrushes among ilex-trees at 7000 feet, apparently nesting: a few *woodchats* observed at same points.

Blackstart.—Plentiful, though less so than on San Cristobal in Sierra de Jerez (5000 feet). A nest in the crag overhanging our bathing-place in the burn at San Gerónimo contained five eggs on April 28. We found others on Monachil, and *grey wagtails* were also breeding at both places.

Bonelli's Warbler.—Arrived, and preparing to nest, end of April: a few *whitethroats* and *rufous warblers* early in May. Robins and wrens nesting, and *nightingales* abundant in lower river-valley.

Eared and *Black-throated Wheatear*.—Ubiquitous but not abundant. In both these forms (as well as in the Common Wheatear) the males displayed a dual stage of plumage; some being completely adult, while others retained an immature state somewhat resembling their first dress (May).

Stonechat.—Four eggs, April 29.

Blackchat and *Crag-martin.*—Both conspicuous by their absence.

[This applies to the higher sierra—both were observed in the lower Monachil—say 4000 feet.]

Ortolans (apparently just arriving during early days of May), with *cirl* and *rock-buntings*, were frequent up to the limits of scrub-growth, say 7500 feet.

Rock-sparrow.—Breeding in crags on lower slopes.

Woodlark.—Lower hills: young on wing, end April.

Short-toed Lark.—Lower hills: about to nest here.

Crested Lark.—Lower hills: common.

Tawny Pipit.—Plentiful, scattered in pairs over the arid hills: males singing tree-pipit fashion, soaring downwards with tail spread overhead.

Great, *Blue*, and *Cole-tits.*—Common, the latter only among the open woods of pine (*Pinus pinaster*).

Raven and *Chough.*—A few.

Hoopoe, *Kestrel*, and *Little Owl.*—A few.

Partridge (redleg).—Scarce: a pair and a single bird observed at 8000 feet among snow-patches and junipers.

Chaffinches and *Serins.*—First broods on wing, end April; nests for second broods building early in May.

Linnets.—Common up to scrub-limit.

Dippers.—Observed on Genil, Darro, Monachil, and all the rivers visited.

Pied Flycatcher.—A male observed on migration, April 30.

In the stupendous rock-gorges which enclose the lower course and outlet of Monachil (3500-5000 feet) are situate the breeding-places of the few griffon-vultures which inhabit this sierra. With them nest some Neophrons, and there is a "Choughery" at 4000 feet, while crag-martins and blackchats (not observed elsewhere), with many blue thrushes, find a congenial home among these giant crags.

While lunching, our goat-herd guide was pointing out rock-crannies where wolves, from lack of brushwood, used to lie up by day, and complaining that he could not keep poultry by reason of the marten-cats. Suddenly he broke out in shrill and altered tones: "Tell me, Caballero," he exclaimed, "tell me *why* you come here from lands afar to suffer discomfort and hardship and to undergo all these labours—why do you do this?" We endeavoured to explain. "You see, Gregorio, that God created all manner of animals different one from another. So also He created mankind in many different races—all brothers, yet differing as brothers do. You Spanish belong to the Latin race. You have many fine qualities, some of which we lack. But you rather concern yourselves with material things and disregard platonic study. We of British race are imbued with desire to learn all that can be traced of Nature and her ways. Some examine the earth itself, its formations and transformations; others the birds or the beasts. There are those who devote

their lives to studying the beetles and ants, even the mosquitoes. Now in Spain you find none who are interested in such matters."

Gregorio sat silent and seemed impressed; but Caraballo interjected: "Why waste time? These people are not concerned (*entrometidos*) in such matters." True: but Gregorio had appeared interested and intelligent? "Si! but when folk spent lonely lives among the mountains and never see but a petty hill-village once or twice a year, then intelligence goes to sleep (*se pone dormido*)." Certainly five minutes later they were both hammering away again at the customary small-talk of the by-ways.

TYPES OF SPANISH BIRD-LIFE

SPANISH SPARROW (*Passer hispaniolensis* [*sic*], Temm.)

A bird of the wild woods, never seen in towns; builds in foundations of kites' and eagles' nests. Note that Temminck's Latin seems a bit "rocky." The specific name might be *hispaniensis*, or perhaps *hispaniensis*, but *hispaniolensis* never. That adjective must date from a newer era and from a world then unknown.

CHAPTER XXXII

VALENCIA

TWO NOTABLE WILDFOWL RESORTS

(1) The Albufera

For centuries this marine lagoon—the largest sheet of water in Spain—has, along with the forests and wastes that formerly adjoined it, been a stronghold of wild animal-life. As early as the thirteenth century King James I., after wresting the Kingdom of Valencia from the Moors, and dividing its castles and estates among his nobles and generals, selected, with shrewd appreciation, the Albufera for his personal share of the spoils of war. For not only did the great lake with its wild appanages form a truly regal hunting-domain, but the broad lands intervening between the Grao of Valencia, Cullera, and the lake-shores possessed a fabled fertility.

For six centuries the lands and waters of Albufera belonged to the Spanish Crown. Though by edict in A.D. 1250 James I. granted free public rights of fishing (reserving, however, one-fifth of the catch for royal use), yet both he and succeeding monarchs ever continued to extend and improve the amenities of the Crown Patrimony.

In State-papers of James I.'s time, where reference is made to the game, there are expressly specified: "Deer, wild-boar, ibex, francolins, partridges, hares, rabbits, otters, and wildfowl, besides the wealth of fish" in the lake itself. Again, more than four centuries later, an edict of October 31, 1671, expressly specified among resident game, "deer, boar, ibex, and francolin." Now the francolin, although to-day extinct in Spain, is known to have existed on the Mediterranean till quite within modern times, and the other animals named might well have abounded in the wild forests of those days. But the specific mention of

ibex (*twice*, with an interval of 400 years) appeared inexplicable; for it was inconceivable that a wild-goat should ever have occupied the low-lying *dehesas* of Albufera. The discovery of the actual existence of ibex in the sierras of Valencia, however (as recorded above, p. 142), explains the paradox and also throws light on the breadth of mediæval ideas in hunting-boundaries; since the Sierra Martés lies some forty miles inland of Albufera.

Lying about seven miles south-east of Valencia, the lake has a water-area some fourteen miles long by six or seven wide, its circumference being over nine leagues. On the south, it is shut off from the Mediterranean by a strip of pine-clad dunes—the deep green foliage broken in pleasing contrast by intervals of bare sand, forming splashes of gold amidst dark verdure. On all other sides the limits of the lake are marked by yellow reeds which fringe its shores.

Its waters, dotted with the white sails of *faluchos*, present the appearance of a small sea, a resemblance which is accentuated in stormy weather by the height of the waves.

The lake connects by canals with various adjacent villages; while two canals (Perillo and Perilloncl) communicate with the sea, though their mouths are blocked by locks. These locks are closed each year from November 1 till January 1—thereby retaining the whole of the river-waters from inland, in order to raise the interior water-level and so flood the surrounding rice-fields.

This artificial inundation—by disseminating alluvial matter brought down by autumnal rains over the adjacent lands—has greatly extended the area of rice-cultivation, and, of course, equally reduced the original water-surface. The result has been, nevertheless, immensely to augment the enormous numbers of wildfowl which had always made the Albufera their winter home; for no food is so attractive to ducks as rice, while, despite its reduction, the water-area is yet ample.

During the direct tenure of the Crown, all taking of fish or fowl was carried on subject to the regulations of successive kings and their administrators. Ancient methods of fowling, however quaint, do not concern us as natural historians: but two methods described in multitudinous records throw light on altered conditions and sharpened instincts. The first was to "push" the fowl by a line of boats towards sportsmen in concealed posts among reeds,

the ducks either swimming complacently forward or breaking back over the encircling flotilla, when, in each case, large numbers were killed with crossbows. To celebrate the nuptials of Phillip III., no less than 300 boats were thus employed. The second plan involved persuading hosts of quietly paddling ducks to swim forward into reed-beds through which winding channels had been cut, and over which nets were spread.

Needless to add, neither method would nowadays serve to outwit twentieth-century wildfowl.

By the beginning of last century (about 1830), owing to the destruction of forests and reclamation of land for grazing or rice-cultivation, the bigger game had already disappeared; but the flights of winter wildfowl actually increased in proportion to the extended area of rice.

The Albufera continued to be the property of the Crown of Spain from 1250 till May 12, 1865, when the Cortes decreed, and Queen Isabella II. confirmed, its transference to the State.

At the present day the shooting on Albufera is conducted on purely commercial and up-to-date principles. The whole area is mapped out into sections like a chessboard, and each considerable gun-post (or *replaza*, as it is called) is sold by auction.

These specially selected *replazas* number thirty, and are sold for the entire season, the prices varying from £150 for No. 1 down to about £6 for No. 30.

These thirty "reserved stalls" having been disposed of in public competition, the remaining mid-water positions (for which the charge is a dollar or two per day) are then apportioned by drawing lots. Finally, licences are issued at a few pesetas to shoot from the foreshores or from small launches stationed among the reeds at specified spots, but which the licensee must not quit during the shooting.

The sum that finally filtered through to the State during forty years varied between 7500 and 23,000 pesetas (say £300 to £900), a record price being obtained in 1868, namely, 40,000 pesetas. The municipality of Valencia is seeking to obtain the cession of the Albufera from the State.

The gun-posts used are either flat-bottomed boats which can be thrust into a sheltering reed-bed; or, should no cover be available, sunken tubs masked by reeds or rice-stalks. The posts are fixed nominally at a rifle-shot (*tiro de bala*) apart—say 200 yards.

Regular fixed shoots take place every Saturday throughout the season, with, however, certain small exceptions, aimed partly at securing to the fowl a period of rest and quiet on their first arrival, and partly due to the festivals of St. Martin and St. Catherine being public days and free to all.

The species of ducks obtained on Albufera do not differ from those at Daimiel. On these deeper waters pochards and the various diving-ducks are more conspicuous than on the shallower rice-swamps of the Calderería.

(2) The Calderería

In contrast with the Albufera (and with Daimiel) the Calderería is not a natural lagoon, but simply the artificial inundation of rice-grounds (*arrozales*), such inundation being necessary for the cultivation of that grain.

The rice-grounds of the Calderería belong to the three adjacent communes of Sueca, Cullera, and Sollana—held in a joint peasant-proprietorship. The flooding of the *arrozales* was commenced in 1850, the original object being the cultivation of rice, combined with the taking of wildfowl in nets (*paranses*). It was, however, early seen that the enormous quantities of wild-ducks attracted to the spot were of almost equal value with the grain-crop, and the fame of the Calderería attracted troops of sportsmen from all parts of Spain. This influx, for some years, the local authorities endeavoured to check, with a view to securing the sport for local residents—who, by the way, wanted to enjoy this good thing at the price of a dollar a year! In 1880 it was decided to put up to auction the different shooting-posts, or *replazas*, without any restriction.

The whole of the *arrozales* are accordingly divided into defined sections called *replazas*, each perhaps 500 or 600 yards square, forming roughly, as it were, a gigantic chessboard, though the various *replazas* are quite irregular in shape and size. These are sold by public auction at a fixed date. The best positions realise as much as, say, £80 to £100. A large rental is thus obtained yearly, some villages receiving as much as 6000 dollars.

Since the whole shooting area is their common property, every peasant and villager is personally interested in the value and success of the shooting, and each thus becomes virtually a game-

keeper. Hence trespass is impossible. During autumn and up to the first shoot never a human form intrudes upon the deserted rice-grounds; and the enormous assemblages of wildfowl which at that season congregate thereon enjoy uninterrupted peace and security up to mid-November. More favourable conditions it is impossible to conceive—on the Albufera, for example, the fowl are liable to constant disturbance by passing boats, etc.

The first shoot of the year takes place about the date just named, November 15, and is repeated every eighth day thereafter up to the middle of January, when the rice-grounds are run dry.

Upon the completion of the auction sales there is announced a definite day and hour at which (and at which *only*) the lessor is permitted to enter the rice-grounds, in order to prepare his shelter. Should he omit or neglect this opportunity, he is not afterwards allowed to touch it until the actual morning of the shooting.

Since there grows on rice-grounds no natural cover whatever, it is essential to prepare some form of screen or shelter, and the reeds or sedges required for the purpose must be brought from elsewhere.

Across each *replaza*, or conceded space, is erected a double line of screens, two yards apart and carefully masked by a fringe of reeds or rice-stalks. In the intervening "lane" are fixed two or more sunken tubs wherein the shooters can sit concealed.

Hardly has midnight struck on that eventful morn than the world is amove. Highways and byways, on land and water, are crowded by mobilising forces; across the dark waters move forth whole squadrons of boats, punts and launches, each one steering a course towards some far-away *replaza*. Absolute silence reigns. No lights are allowed and no sound shocks the mystery of night save the creaking of punt-pole or lapping of wave—no human sound, that is, for "the night is filled with music"; the pall overhead, the unseen wastes on every side are vocal with wildfowl cries. Continuously the still air is rent and cleft by the rush of myriad pinions. From right and left, before and behind, pass hurrying hosts, their violent flight resonant as the wash of an angry sea. But never a shot is fired. That is against the rules.

Shortly before sunrise the note of a bugle announces to hundreds of impatient ears the signal "Open fire," and in that instant the fusillade from far and near rages like a battle. For a

solid hour, nay, for two and sometimes three, fire continues incessant. First to become silent are the distant guns along the shores; the minor *replazas* slacken down next, and by noon all save two or three of the best posts are reduced to a desultory and dropping fire.

Then a second signal indicates that the "pick-up" may begin—up to that moment not a gunner is permitted to leave his place. This gathering of the game, stopping cripples, etc., induces a short renewal of the fusillade; but soon all is silent once more, and at three o'clock a third signal rings out, and at once every sportsman must quit the shooting-ground.

Besides the lessees of the auction-sold *puestos* (many of whom come from Madrid and distant parts of Spain), there foregather on these occasions all the local gunners; and far away beyond those sacred areas secured by purchase there form up league-long lines of fowlers by the distant shore; so that, between the private and privileged *puestos* and the free public lines outside, there may assemble in all some 3000 gunners. Hence these *tiradas* partake of the character of a popular festival. Yet in spite of such numbers there is not the slightest confusion or danger, so perfect are the rules and so scrupulously are they observed.

With so many guns scattered over wide areas no precise record of the exact numbers secured are possible; but, according to the estimates of those best calculated to judge, as many as 22,000 to 23,000 head (ducks and coots) are obtained in a single morning.

The records of individual guns in the best *replazas* run from 100 to 200 ducks gathered, and occasionally exceed those figures.

At the first shoot of the year fully 25 per cent of the spoil are coots; but at the later shoots ducks are obtained in greater proportion, as coots then quit the rice-grounds. These later shoots do not produce quite such stupendous totals; but still immense numbers are bagged—ten or twelve thousand in a morning.

As the majority of purchasers come from a distance and usually only remain for one, or perhaps two, of the fixed shooting days, such prices as £80 to £100 represent a fairly stiff rent.

Few mallards are obtained at the first shoot, but their numbers increase as the winter advances. The chief species are pintail,

wigeon, teal, and shoveller, together with a few shelducks and many common and red-crested pochards. Flamingoes and spoonbills frequent the shallows in small numbers.

As individual instances; from a *replaza* that cost 900 pesetas (say £40), and which was the *ninth* in point of price that year, one gun fired 700 cartridges in a single morning.

The best *replaza*—at least the most expensive (it cost 1500 pesetas)—was tenanted last winter by friends from whose experiences, not too encouraging, we gather: At the first shoot (November 13) the post was occupied by a single gun, who, after firing 400 shots, was compelled to desist owing to injury to his shoulder. "I believe," he writes, "I might have fired 1500 cartridges had I continued all day, but was obliged to leave early. The boatmen had then gathered ninety—sixty ducks, thirty coot—and expected to recover more."

On November 28 the post was occupied by three guns: "No day for duck, a blazing sun so hot that the reflection from the water blistered our faces. The ducks mounted up high in air and mostly cleared early in the proceedings, though some were attracted by our 100 decoys. We killed ninety-six, mostly wigeon and pochard, a few mallard and teal, besides twenty snipe. The desideratum is a really rough day, but that at Valencia is past praying for."

The *arrozales* are run dry (and of course the shooting stopped) by the middle of January. The water, in fact, is only kept up so long solely for the sake of the shooting. So soon as its level has fallen a couple of inches the fowl all leave directly.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ON SMALL-GAME SHOOTING IN SPAIN

Hardly will one enter a village *posada* or a peasant's lonely cot without observing one inevitable sign. Among the simple adornments of the whitewashed wall and as an integral item thereof hangs a caged redleg. And from the rafters above will be slung an antediluvian fowling-piece, probably a converted "flinter," bearing upon its rusty single barrel some such inscription—inset in gold characters as, "Antequera, 1843." These two articles, along with a cork-stoppered powder-horn and battered leathern shot-belt, constitute the stock-in-trade and most cherished treasures of our rustic friend, the Spanish cazador. Possibly he also possesses a *pachón*, or heavily built native pointer; but the dog is chiefly used to find ground-game or quail, since the redleg, ever alert and swift of foot, defies all pottering pursuit. Hence the *reclamo*, or call-bird, is almost universally preferred for that purpose.

Red-legged partridges abound throughout the length and breadth of wilder Spain—not, as at home, on the open corn-lands, but amidst the interminable scrub and brushwood of the hills and dales, on the moory wastes, and palmetto-clad prairie. On the latter hares, quail, and lesser bustard vary the game.

Thither have ever resorted sportsmen of every degree—the lord of the land and the peasant, the farmer, the Padre Cura of the parish, or the local medico—all free to shoot, and each carrying the traitor *reclamo* in its narrow cage. The central idea is, of course, that the *reclamo*, by its siren song, shall call up to the gun any partridge within hearing, when its owner, concealed in the bush hard by, has every opportunity of potting the unconscious game as it runs towards the decoy—two at a shot preferred, or more if possible. Twere unjust to reproach the peasant-gunner for the deed; flying shots with his old "flinter" would merely

mean wasted ammunition and an empty pot—misfortunes both in his *res angustae domi*. We have ourselves, on African veld, where dinner depends on the gun, meted out similar measure to strings of cackling guinea-fowl without compunction; but in Spain we have never tried the *reclamo*, nor wish to.

That the race of redlegs should have survived it all—year in and year out—bespeaks a wondrous fecundity, and has inspired new-born ideas of "preservation," which have been initiated in Spain with marked success. To this subject we refer later.

Though we have ourselves (maybe from "insular prejudice") systematically refused to see the *reclamo* work his treacherous rôle, yet many Spanish sportsmen are enthusiastic over the system, which they describe as *una faena muy interesante*, and are as proud of their call-birds as we of our setters. The *reclamos* may be of either sex. The cock-partridges become past-masters of the art of calling up their wild rivals from afar; and by a softer note the wild hen is also lured to her doom—for the dual influences of love and war are both called into play. The male hears the defiant challenge of battle and, all aflame, hurries by alternative flights and runs to seek the unseen challenger. As distance lessens the fire of each taunt increases, and, blind with passion, the luckless champion dashes on to that fatal opening where he is aligned by barrels peeping from the thicket. The female, with more tender purpose, also draws near—the seductive love-note entices; but, oh! the wooing o't—a few pellets of lead end that idyll. It is then—when either rival or lover, it matters not which, lies low in death alongside his cage—that the well-constituted *reclamo* shows his fibre. So overcome with savage joy, the narrow cage will scarce contain him as he bursts into exultant pæons of victory. On the other hand, sullen disappointment is exhibited by the decoy when his exploit has only resulted in a missed shot.

In the spring the female call-note is more effective than that of the male.

Well-trained *reclamos* may be worth anything from £2 up to £10. Recently a yearly licence of ten shillings per bird has been levied. This has either reduced their numbers, or perhaps caused them to be kept more secretly. Formerly a *cicada* in a tiny cage and a *reclamo* in its conical prison were contiguous objects in almost every doorway.

Ground-game is the special favourite of the Spanish cazador.

He will search hundreds of acres for a problematical hare, and a long day's hunt with his trusty *pachón* is amply rewarded by a couple or two of diminutive rabbits about half the weight of ours, but whose speed verily stands in inverse ratio. For the life of the Spanish rabbit is passed in the midst of alarms; supremely conscious of soaring eagles and hawks overhead, he never willingly shows in the open by daylight, or if forced to it, then terror lends wings to his feet. The death of a hare, however, represents to the cazador the climax of terrestrial triumph. In those ecstatic moments the animal (average weight 4½ lbs.) is held aloft by the hind-legs, a subject for admiration and self-gratulation; mentally it is weighed again and again to a chorus of soliloquising ejaculations, "Grande como un chivo" = as big as a kid!

The quail, though extremely abundant at its passage-seasons (when in September the Levante, or S.E. wind, blows for days together, blocking their transit to Africa, Andalucia is crammed with accumulated quails), yet represents but a small morsel in a culinary sense, and is swift of wing to boot. Neither of these attributes commend its pursuit to our friend with the rusty single-barrel; and similar reasons bear, with increased force, on the case of snipe. These game-birds are left severely alone—that is, with the gun.

Bags of twenty brace of quail (and in former years of forty or fifty brace) may then be made where, on the wind changing next day, never a quail will be found.

In spring, again, great numbers pass northward, but many remain to nest on the fertile *vegas* of Guadalquivir and on the plains of Castile. At that season quail are chiefly taken by nets; but on systems so cunning and elaborate that we regret having no space for descriptive detail. Put briefly, in Andalucia the fowler spreads a gossamer-woven fabric loosely over the growing corn; then, lying alongside, by means of a *pito* (an instrument that exactly reproduces the dactylic call-note of the quarry) induces every combative male within earshot either to run beneath or to alight precisely upon the outspread snare. So perfect is the imitation that quail will even run over the fowler's prostrate form in their search for the adversary. In Valencia living call-birds (hung in cages on poles) are substituted for the *pito*, and the net is more of a fixture—small patches of the previous autumn's crop being left uncut expressly to attract quail to definite points.

The Andalucian quail frequents palmetto-scrub and is very local—rarely can more than two or three couple be killed in a day, and that

only in September. Some appear then to retire to Africa, along with the turtle-doves—the latter a bird that surely deserves passing note, since few are smarter on wing or afford quicker snap-shooting while passing by millions through this country every autumn.

The conditions above indicated prevail over a vast proportion of rural Spain, which thus presents small attraction to wandering gunner, however humble his ideals.

There are other regions where the landowners, though in no sense "preserving," yet prohibit free entry on their properties owing to damage done—such as disturbing stock, stampeding cattle on to cultivation in a land where no fences exist, and so on. Naturally such ground carries more game, and subject to permission being received, fair and sometimes excellent sport is attainable. Thus, on one such property the tangled woods of wild olive abound with woodcock, though difficulties are presented by the impenetrable character of the briar-bound thickets. Were "rides" cut and clearings enlarged quite large bags of woodcock might be secured. The rough scrubby hills adjoining carry a fair stock of partridge, and we have often killed forty or fifty snipe in the marshy valleys that intervene. The following will serve as an example of three consecutive days' shooting on such unpreserved ground (two guns—S. D. and B. F. B.):—

	Nov. 13.	Nov. 14.	Nov. 15.	Total.
Snipe	101	32	155	288
Ducks and Teal . . .	2	9	3	14
Wild-Geese . . .	3	...	...	3
Sundries	...	...	4	4
	105	41	162	309

Three days in February on similar ground, but in an unfavourable season, yielded 79 snipe, 5 woodcock, 19 golden plovers, 3 lesser bustard, a hare, and a few sundries.

Lebrija, *December* 1897.—Two Guns, C. D. W. and B. F. B. (Half-day)
117 snipe (mostly driven)

Lebrija, *November* 16, 1904.—Same Two Guns
112 snipe, 2 mallard, 1 curlew

Casas Viejas, *November* 19, 1906.—Three Guns (S. D., C. D. W., and B. F. B.)
123 snipe, 1 mallard, 5 teal

Partridge-Shooting

Passing from the use of the *reclamo*, of which we have no personal experience, we turn to the system practised in the Coto Doñana. Here we always have the marisma bordering, as an inland sea, our northern frontage. Upon that fact the system known as "*averando*" is based.

A line of six or eight guns, with sufficient beaters between, and mounted keepers on either flank (the whole extending over, say, half-a-mile of front), is formed up at a distance of a mile or two inland from the marisma. On advancing, with the wings thrown forward, and mounted men skirmishing ahead, a space comprising hundreds of acres of scrub is thus enclosed. The partridge, running forward among the cistus or rising far beyond gunshot, are gradually pushed down towards the water; then, as the advancing line approaches the marisma, with the belts of rush and sedge that border it, the work begins. The game, unwilling to face the water, perforce come swinging back over the shooting-line. Naturally on seeing encompassing danger in full view behind and barring their retreat, the partridge spin up heavenwards—higher and yet higher, till they finally pass over the guns at a height and speed and with a pronounced curve that ensures the maximum of difficulty in every shot offered.

In this final stage of the operation grow cork-oaks whose bulk and evergreen foliage add further complexity for the gunner.

It illustrates the exertions made by the partridges to attain an altitude and a speed sufficient to carry them safely over the clearly-seen danger below, that should a bird which has succeeded in thus running the gauntlet happen to be found after the beat is over, it will often be too exhausted to rise again. Such tired birds are often caught by the dogs.

As many as six or eight *averos*, as they are termed, may be carried out during a winter's day. The walking in places is apt to be rough, through jungle and bush—chiefly cistus and rosemary, but intermixed with tree-heaths, brooms, and gorse—intercepted with stretches of water which must be waded without wincing, for it is essential that each man (gun or beater) maintains correctly his allotted position in the advance.

Naturally in a sandy waste, devoid of corn or tillage of any kind, partridge cannot be numerous. They are, moreover, subject

to terrible enemies in the eagles, kites, and hawks of every description; while lynxes, wild-cats, foxes, and other beasts-of-prey take daily and nightly toll; then in spring their eggs are devoured by the big lizards, by harriers, mongoose, and magpies in thousands. We have recently endeavoured to increase their numbers by grubbing up 300 acres of scrub and cultivating wheat. But here again Nature opposes us. Deer break down the fences, ignore our guards armed with lanterns and blank cartridge, trample down more than they eat, and the rabbits finish the rest! Moreover, in wet seasons the ground is flooded, the crops destroyed; while, if too dry, the seed will not germinate, and all the time the unkillable brushwood comes and comes again.

Forty or fifty brace represent average days; though it is fair to add that they are but few who fully avail the fleeting opportunities at those back-swerving dots in the sky.

Rabbits

The cistus plains abound with rabbits. One sees them by scores moving ahead, but just beyond gunshot range, which they calculate to a nicety. Others dart from underfoot to disappear in an instant in the cover. Few are shot while walking; but some pretty sport is obtainable by short drives, say a quarter-mile. The line of keepers and beaters ride round to windward, encircling some well-stocked bush; then slowly and noisily, with frequent halts, advance down-wind—the rabbit is as susceptible of scent as a deer. Meanwhile the dogs are having a rare time of it hustling the bunnies forward. The guns are placed each to command some clear spot, for where scrub grows thick nothing can be seen. A momentary glimpse is all one gets, and snap-shooting essential. The most favourable spots are where a strip of open ground lies immediately behind the guns. The rabbits fairly fly this, a dozen at a time, and at speed that suggests some one having set fire to their tails.

In days of phenomenal bags, our Spanish totals read humble enough. We frequently kill a hundred or more rabbits in two or three short drives, besides such partridge as may also have been enclosed. Were a whole day devoted to rabbits alone, much greater numbers would of course result. But having such variety of resource at disposal (to say nothing of difficulty in disposing

of large quantities), the *conejete* rarely receives more than an hour or two's attention.

Hares (*Lepus mediterraneus*), common all over Spain, are rather more numerous in the marisma than on the drier grounds. They have indeed developed semi-aquatic habits, in times of flood swimming freely from island to island and making arboreal "forms" in the half-submerged samphire-bush. Should the whole become submerged, the hares betake themselves to the main shore, and on such occasions, with two guns, we have shot a dozen or so on a drive. These small Spanish hares are marvellously fleet of foot, especially when an almost equally fleet-footed *podenco* is in full chase over ground as flat and bare as a bowling-green.

In these hares the females are larger and greyer in colour than the males. Their irides are yellow, with a small pupil, whereas in the male the eye is hazel and the pupil large. The fur of the latter is bright chestnut in hue, especially on hind-quarters and legs, which frequently show irregular splashes of white. The lower parts are purest white, and along the clean-cut line of demarcation the colour contrasts are the strongest. Long film-like hairs grow far beyond the ordinary fur on their bodies, and the tails are longer and carried higher than in our British species.

Weights of Ten Spanish Hares, killed January 30, 1908

Males	. .	4½	4½	4½	4½	4½ lbs., deadweight
Females	. .	4¾	5	5½	5½	5½ lbs., deadweight

Weights of Spanish Rabbits (in Couples)

Ten couples	. 3	3	3	3¼	3¼	3¼	3¼	3½	3½	3¾ lbs., clean

These rabbits differ from the home-breed not only in their smaller size, but in the colder grey of their fur and large transparent ears.

Hitherto shooting over great areas of rural Spain has been practised under conditions absolutely natural—almost pristine. The game on mountain, moor, or marsh is not only free to any hunter who possesses the skill to capture it, but it is left to fight unaided its struggle for existence against hosts of enemies, feathered, furred, and scaled, the like of which has no equivalent in our crowded isles; and which work terrible havoc, each in its own way, among the milder members of creation. The presence of so many fierce raptorials, however (though it ruin the "bag"),

READY TO CAST OFF. THE PACK OF PODENCOS IN COUPLES.

THE DAY'S RESULTS.

ROYAL SHOOTING AT THE PARDO, NEAR MADRID.

adds for a naturalist an incomparable charm to days spent in Spanish wilds. Alas! that even here those pristine conditions should already appear to be doomed, that every savage spirit must be quenched, till nothing save the utilitarian survive! The following notes on game-preservation in Spain indicate the beginning of the change.

On some great Sporting Estates of Spain

Game-preservation, in the stricter sense in which it is practised in England, was unknown in Spain till within our own earlier days. But now many great estates yield bags of partridge that may challenge comparison with results obtained elsewhere.

Whether those results equal the best of the crack partridge-manors in England or not we do not inquire. It is immaterial and irrelevant. No comparison is either desirable or possible where natural conditions and difficulties differ fundamentally. But the result at least throws a ray of reflected light upon the energy and capacity of the Spanish gamekeeper, who, under extraordinary difficulties, has aided and enabled his employers to produce conditions which only a few years ago would have appeared impossible. It should be added that these estates which now realise surprising results have, in most instances, belonged to the same owners during generations, though not till towards the end of last century was any special care bestowed upon the game.

The estate of Mudéla, in La Mancha, the property of the Marquis de Mudéla, Count of Valdelagrana, stands unrivalled in a sporting sense. Its extent is approximately 80,000 acres, and the whole abounds with red-legged partridge, rabbits, and hares. A dozen consecutive driving-days can be enjoyed, each on fresh ground, and 1000 partridges are often here secured by seven guns, driving, in a day.

There is here quite a small proportion of corn-land or tillage, the greater portion consisting of the rough pasturage, interspersed with patches of scattered brush and palmetto, which is characteristic of southern Spain.

The great results achieved (for 1000 partridges a day, all wild-bred birds, can only so be described) are due to systematic

preservation, including the trapping of noxious animals, furred or feathered, and the payment of rewards to the peasantry for each nest hatched-off—in short, by efficient protection of the game, with the destruction of its enemies. In hot dry summers it is necessary to provide both water and food to the game.

Next to Mudéla, the most celebrated sporting properties include those of Lachár and Tajarja, both in the province of Granada, and belonging to the Duke of San Pedro de Galatino; Trasmulas in the same province belonging to the Conde de Agrela, and Ventosilla, the property of the Duke of Santona in the province of Toledo. There should also be named Daranézas in the last-named province, the Marquis de la Torrecilla; and Daramezán (Toledo), the Marquis de Alcanices.

At Malpica in Toledo, the estate of the Duke of Arión, there were killed, on the occasion of a visit of King Alfonso XIII., a total in one day of 1655 head (partridges, hares, and rabbits), of which His Majesty was credited with 600.

We extract the following from the Madrid newspaper *La Epoca*, January 22, 1908:—

> At El Rincon, Navalcarnero, near Madrid, the King, with thirteen other guns, were the guests of the Marquesa de Manzanedo on January 20. Eight drives were completed, 350 beaters being employed. The total recovered numbered 1400 head, of which 241 fell to the King's gun. His Majesty continued shooting with astonishing brilliancy even while darkness was already setting in, and wound up with four consecutive right-and-lefts when one could scarce see even a few yards away. King Alfonso killed 97 partridge, 31 hares, 98 rabbits, and 15 various—double the number that fell to the next highest score.

Most of the places named are capable of yielding from 500 to 800 and even 1000 partridge in a day's driving, besides other game.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ALIMAÑAS

THE MINOR BEASTS OF CHASE

We have no British equivalent for this generic term, applied in Spain to a group of creatures, chiefly belonging to the canine, feline, and viverrine families, that deserve a chapter to themselves. The Spanish word *Alimañas* includes the lynxes and wild-cats, foxes, mongoose, genets, badgers, otters, and such like. It might therefore be rendered as "vermin," but surely only in the benevolent sense—as it were, a term of endearment. We have preferred the expression "minor beasts of chase," though it may be objected that such are not, in fact, beasts of chase. We reply that hardly any wild animals are harder to secure in fair contest or more capable of testing the venatic resource of the hunter.

For these animals are beasts-of-prey, and that fact alone implies nothing less than that in their very nature and life-habits they must be more cunning, more astute, than those other creatures (mostly game) on which they are ordained to subsist. Moreover, being nocturnals, their senses of sight, scent, and hearing all far exceed our own, and they possess the enormous advantage that they see equally well in the dark.

Wild Spain, with her 56 per cent of desert or sparsely peopled regions, is a paradise for predatory creatures—alike the furred and the feathered—and *alimañas* abound whether in the bush and scrub of her torrid plains, or amid the heavier jungle of her mountain-ranges.

Numerous as they are, yet these night-rovers rarely come in evidence unless one goes expressly in search of them. In regular shooting, with organised parties, they are more or less ignored, or rather they pass unseen through the lines, moving so silently and stealthily and always choosing the thickest covert. With

guns from 100 to 200 yards apart and upwards, each intent on the larger game, the secretive *dimonios* easily get through —indeed, wolves and even big boars, though the crash of brushwood may be heard, often pass unseen.

Many unconventional days have the authors enjoyed in express pursuit of these keen-eyed creatures—call them vermin if you will. There are four methods which we have found effective:

1. Short drives of individual jungles where sufficient open spaces occur to leeward to enable the game to be seen.

2. Long drives of extensive jungles, converging on guns placed at points that either command the probable lines of retreat, or cover some other favourite resort wherein the quarry is likely to seek refuge.

3. Calling—in Spanish, *chillando*.

4. Watching at dawn or dusk, either with or without a "drag."

1. The first plan is, of course, the simplest; but it must be borne in mind that this is essentially close-quarters' work—hence the utmost silence is necessary. Horses must be picketed at least a mile back, for the clank of hoof on rock or the clashing of the bucket-like Spanish stirrups in bush will awaken even a dormouse. All proceed on foot; and the whole plan having been arranged beforehand, not a word need now be spoken, each gun taking his allotted place in silence. Guns may be as far as 100 yards apart (since mould-shot is effective up to nearly that range) and each man should station himself looking into the beat, so as to command the intervening "opens," while himself absolutely concealed and still as a stone god, since he is now competing with some of the keenest eyes on earth. All the cats, moreover, come on so stealthily, making good their advance yard by yard, that quite possibly a great tawny lynx may be coolly surveying your position ere your eye has caught the slightest movement ahead.

Nothing emphasises the amazing stealth of these silent creatures more than such incidents: when suddenly you find, within twenty yards, a wild beast, standing nearly two feet at shoulder, slowly approaching through quite thin bush; how, in wonder's name, did it get so near unseen? Foxes, as a rule, come bundling along with far less precaution and no such vigilant look-out ahead, though they will instantly detect the least *movement*

in front. A fox will often appear so deep in thought as to be absolutely thunderstruck when he finds himself face to face with a gun at six yards distance. In direst consternation he fairly bounds around, describing a complete circle of fur; whereas a cat in like circumstance merely deflects her course with coolest deliberation and never a sign of alarm or increase of speed. But within six more yards she will have vanished from view—covert or none. Adepts all are the cats, alike in appearing one knows not whence, and in disappearing one knows not how.

Yonder goes a fox, slowly trotting along below the crest, in his self-sufficient, nonchalant style. His upstanding fur, long bushy brush, and swollen neck appear to double his bulk and lend him quite an imposing figure. But let a rifle-ball sing past his ears or dash up a cloud of the sand below—what a transformation! One hardly now recognises the long lean streak that whips up and over the ridge.

A handsome trophy is the Spanish lynx, especially those more brightly coloured examples sparsely spotted with big black splotches arranged, more or less, in interrupted lines. The ear-tufts—indeed in adults the extreme tips of the ears themselves—point inwards and backwards; and the narrow irides are pale yellow (between lemon and hazel), the pupil being full, round, and black, nearly filling the circle. In the wild-cat the pupil is a thin upright, set in a cruel pale-green iris.

We have tried FIRE as a means of securing the smaller *alimañas*, such as mongoose, but it is seldom a thicket or *mancha* can be so completely isolated as to leave no line of escape. The animals, moreover, are astute enough to retire under cover of the clouds of smoke that roll away to leeward.

2. LONG DRIVES, extending over, say, a couple of miles of brush-wood (which may contain half-a-dozen patches of thicker jungle, all separate), give wide scope for skilled fieldcraft and demand no small local knowledge. The first essential is "an eye for a country." There are men to whom this faculty is denied; some seem incapable of acquiring it. Others, again, appear correctly to diagnose even a difficult country, with its chances, almost at a first experience. The favoured haunts of game, together with their accustomed lines of retreat when disturbed, must be studied. Each day, though engaged on other pursuit, one's eye should be reading those lessons that are written in "spoor," and noting each

commanding point and salient angle or other local "advantage" in the terrain.

Such drives necessarily occupy more time; moreover, the precise lines of entry along which game may approach are less restricted—hence follows an even greater demand on that vigilance already emphasised. But to the hunter the mental gratification, the sense of dominion achieved, is ample reward when his deep-laid plans succeed and when along one or more of his ambushed lines the cunning carnivórae pursue an unsuspecting course.

Nature herself may assist by signs which set the expectant hunter yet more instantly alert. A distant kite suddenly swerving or checking its flight has seen *something*. The chattering of a band of magpies may only mean that they have struck a "find," say a dead rabbit—*tacitus pasci si posset corvus*, etc. But it may easily indicate a moving nocturnal, and such signs should never be ignored. Similarly a covey of partridges springing with continued cackling is a certain token of the presence of an enemy; while a terrified-looking rabbit, with staring eye and ears laid back, means that an interview is then instantly impending.

It may be necessary (as where a desert-stretch flanks the beat) to place "stops" far outside. These are as important as in a grouse-drive, but quite tenfold more difficult to array.

In these more extensive operations the lynx, in evading the guns, is sometimes intercepted by the advancing pack behind. Then, if by luck the cat can be forced into the open, she goes off at fine speed in great bounds, as a leopard covers the veld, and (the horses in this case being picketed close by) may sometimes be "tree'd" or run to bay in some distant thicket. In that case the assistance of the hunters is needed, for a lynx at bay will hold-up a whole pack of *podencos*, sitting erect on her haunches with her back to the bush and dealing half-arm blows with lightning speed. These *podencos*, it should be explained, are not intended to close, since all high-couraged dogs, we find, meet a speedy death from the tusks of wild-boars.

When pressed in the open, we have seen a lynx deliberately pass through deep water that lay in her line of flight.

3. Calling.—The coney was ever a puny folk, yet in Tarshish he thrives and multiplies amidst numberless foes aloft and alow. From the heavens above fierce eyes directing hooked beaks and

clenched talons survey his every movement; on the earth lynxes, cats, and foxes subsist chiefly on him; while below ground foumart and mongoose penetrate his farthest retreats year in and year out. He seems to possess absolutely no protection, yet he endures all this, supports his enemies, and increases, ever, to appearance, gaily unconscious of the perils that beset him. Once, however, let misfortune overtake the rabbit, and his cry of distress brings instant response—from scrub and sky, from thicket and lurking lair, assemble the fiercer folk, each intent on his flesh.

It is upon this fact that the system of calling, or, in Spanish, *chillando*, is based. The instrument is simple. A crab's claw, or the green bark of a two-inch twig slipped off its stalk, will, in the lips of an adept, produce just such a cry of cunicular distress. Armed with this, and observing the wind, one takes post concealed by bush but commanding some open glade in front. The most favourable time is dawn and dusk—the latter for choice, since then predatory animals are waking up hungry. The first "call" by our Spanish companion almost startles by its lifelike verisimilitude. At short intervals these ringing distress-signals resound through the silent bush; if no response follows, we try another spot. First, a distant kite or buzzard, hearing the call, comes wheeling this way, but naturally the birds-of-prey from their lofty point of view detect the human presence and pursue their quest elsewhere. The rabbits themselves, from some inexplicable cause, are among the first to respond.

Within that opposite wall of jungle you detect a furtive movement; presently with jerky, spasmodic gait a rabbit darts out; it sits trembling with staring eyes and ears laid aback; another rolls over on its side and performs strange antics as though under hypnotic influence. In two minutes you have a *séance* of mesmerised rabbits.

My companion touches me on the arm; away beyond, and half behind him (almost on the wind), stands a fox intently gazing. Before the gun can be brought to bear it is necessary to step round the keeper's front, and one expects that that first movement will mean the instant disappearance of the vulpine. Not so! There he stands, statuesque, while the manœuvre is executed. Is he, too, hypnotised? On one occasion the authors, standing shoulder to shoulder with the keeper behind them, were only

concealed by a single bush in front. At the third or fourth call a wild-cat sprang from the thicket beyond, fairly flew the intervening thirty yards at a bound, and landed in the single bush at our feet (precisely where the "rabbit" should have been) before a gun could be raised. What a marvellous exhibition of wild hunting!

In this case, too, we had had notice in advance by the noisy rising of a pair of partridges sixty yards away in the bush. That cat scaled 12½ lbs. dead-weight.

All the beasts-of-prey can be secured in this manner. February is their pairing-season; but the best time for "calling"

IMPERIAL EAGLE PASSING OVERHEAD

(The spectator is presumed to be lying on his back!)

is a month or so later—in March and April—when young rabbits appear and when the *alimañas* themselves have their litters to feed.

Feathered raptores, such as eagles, kites, and buzzards, can also be obtained by "calling," but, as above indicated, their loftier position enables them to see the guns, and it is necessary in their case to prepare a covered shelter in which one can stand, concealed from above.

4. Watching.—The fourth and last system brings one face to face with wild nature in her nocturnal aspects. Such aspects (to the majority of mankind) are unknown; but night-work, whether at home, in Africa, or in Spain, has always strongly appealed to the writers. Wild creatures do not go to bed at night like lazy men; on the contrary, night is the period of fullest activity for a large proportion of God's creation, whether of fur or feather. To form an intimate personal acquaintance (however imperfect) with these, the comfort of the blankets must be sacrificed.

Where stretches of open country border or intersect jungle, or lie between the nocturnal hunting-grounds of carnivorae and the thickets where they lie-up by day, there one may enjoy hours of intense interest in watching what passes under the moon. In the Coto Doñana we have many such spots, some within an hour or two's ride of our shooting-lodges. Here, when the moon shines full, and the soft south wind blows towards the dark leagues of cistus and tree-heath behind us, we line-out three or four guns, each looking outwards across glittering sand-wastes on his front. There, on smooth expanse, one may detect every moving thing. Those shadowy forms that seem to skim the surface without touching it are stone-curlews, and beyond them is a less mobile object, whose identity none would guess by sight. That is a *tortuga*, or land-tortoise, tracing its singular double trail. Across the sand passes a bigger shadow—rabbits and the rest all vanish. What was that shadow? A strange growl overhead, and you see it is an eagle-owl that has scattered the ghost-like groups. Now there is something on the far skyline ahead—something that moves and puzzles—four mobile objects that were not there five seconds ago. These prove to be the ears of two hinds; presently the spiky horns of a stag appear behind them, and the trio move slowly across our front, stopping to nibble some tuft of bent.

None of these are what we seek, but as dawn approaches you may (or may not) detect the form of some beast-of-prey making for its lair in the jungle behind you. Foxes, as their habit is, trot straight in; the lynx comes with infinite caution. Should some starveling bush survive a hundred yards out, she may stop, squatting on her haunches, half-hidden in its shade. You can see there is something there, but the distance is just beyond a sure range, and seldom indeed will that cat come nearer. However low and still you have laid the while, she will, by some subtle feline intuition, have gleaned (perhaps half unconsciously even to herself) a sense of danger. When day has dawned, you will find the retiring spoor winding backwards behind some gentle swell that leads to an unseen hollow beyond—and to safety. Truly you agree when the keeper says, "Lynxes see *best* in the dark."

In a wide country it is of course purely fortuitous should any of these animals approach within shot. To assure that result with

greater certainty we have adopted the plan of a "drag." Two or three hours before taking our positions (that is, shortly after midnight), a keeper rides along far outside on the sand, trailing behind his horse a bunch of split-open rabbits. Upon arriving outside the intended position of each gun, he directs his course inwards, thus dragging the bait close up to the post. Then taking a fresh bunch of rabbits, he repeats the operation to each post in turn. Thus every incoming beast must strike the scented trail at one point or another. Occasionally one will follow the drag right into the expectant gun, more often (the animals being full at that hour) it will leave the trail after following it for a greater or less distance. Some ignore it altogether. This applies to all sorts. The sand, as day dawns, forms a regular lexicon of spoor. One can trace each movement of the night. There go the plantigrade tracks of a badger, and hard by the light-footed prints of mongoose, mice, and an infinity of minor creatures.

Foxes most frequently capture their prey in fair chase, running them down, as shown by the double spoor ending in blood. Lynxes never chase; they kill by stalking, and a crouching spoor ends in a spring. Both these habitually carry away or bury all they do not devour on the spot.

From the end of January onwards (that being the pairing-season) foxes may often be seen abroad by daylight in couples, and in such case, provided *they* are *seen first*, are easily brought-up by "calling." Lynxes never show-up so by daylight, but an hour or two before dawn their weird wailing cries may be heard in the bush from mid-February onwards.

The mongoose is perhaps the least easily secured, being absolutely nocturnal and running so low (like a giant weasel) as to be almost invisible, however slight the covert. It is, moreover, an adept at concealment, and will scarcely be detected even at thirty yards if stationary. The best way to secure specimens of badger and mongoose is by digging-out their breeding-earths or warrens. An initial difficulty is to find the earths amid leagues of scrub or rugged mountain-sides; and even when located it may be necessary to burn off half an acre of brushwood before the spade can be brought into action. From one set of earths we have succeeded in digging out five big mongoose alive.

That night, though confined in strong wooden cases, they gnawed their way out, and were never seen more, albeit their prison was on board a yacht anchored in mid-stream and half-a-mile from shore.

A few such days and nights as these teach that wild Spain cherishes other animals besides the game, to the full as interesting and even more difficult to secure.

If we are asked (as we often have been before) why we molest creatures which have no value when killed, we reply that almost without exception our Spanish specimens have gone to enrich one collection or another, public or private, and that during the year in which we write this the authors spent a fortnight in obtaining a series of these animals for our National Museum at South Kensington, with the following results :—[1]

Four lynxes—two males, 30¼ and 31 lbs.; two females, 18½ and 23 lbs. —representing both types, namely, (1) that with many small spots, and (2) the handsomer form with fewer large and conspicuous blotches.

One wild-cat (an exceptional specimen)—a male of 15 lbs., with yellow irides instead of the usual cold, cruel, pale-green eyes like an unripe gooseberry. This cat was what the Spanish keepers describe as *rayado* = banded, *i.e.* the spots are arrayed in regular series or interrupted bands rather than scattered promiscuously. This race is distinguished as *gato clavo*, the ordinary wild-cat being known as *gato romano*.

Several other wild-cats (*Gatos romanos*)—males weighing from 10¾ to 12½ lbs.; females weighing from 7½ to 8¼ lbs.

In the sierras wild-cats run heavier than this, for we have killed in Moréna a wild-cat that scaled 7¾ kilos, or upwards of 17 lbs.

Two badgers—male, 17½ lbs.; female, 14½ lbs. These Spanish badgers are blacker in the legs than British examples, and their fore-claws are more powerfully developed, possibly in this case through living in sand. Really big males weigh nearly double the above.

Ten foxes (*Vulpes melanogaster*)—six males weighing 13¾, 14, 15 16½, 16½, 17 lbs.; four females weighing 11, 11¾, 13½, 14 lbs.

Besides "small deer," such as rats and mice, voles, moles, and dormice, to say nothing of a whole red-stag and a whole wild-boar!

[Postscript]

March 2, 1907.—*Chillando* this evening at the Oyillos del Tio Juan Roque, a big grey sow with numerous progeny came

[1] Several of these animals, moreover, yield excellent fur.

trotting up to within a few yards—whether to devour the supposed rabbit or merely from curiosity was not apparent. On realising the situation, she turned and dashed off with an indignant snort, followed by her striped brood, but did not go far before stopping (like Lot's wife) to listen and look back.

Later, at the Sabinal, just upon dusk, a fox appeared about 120 yards away, down-wind. Though quite aware of our presence, both by scent and sight, he deliberately sat down on his haunches to watch: but no charm of the *chillar* would induce a nearer approach, and a rifle-ball whistling within an inch or two of his ears broke the spell.

On May 16, 1910, a mongoose responded with unusual alacrity to the first "call," running up within twenty yards. This was an adult male and weighed $8\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.

. . . . . .

We have endeavoured to rear some of these animals in captivity. The young wild-cats are by far the most intractable—perfect fiends of savage fury, quite unamenable to civilisation. The lynx at least affects a measure of subjection, but remains always unreliable and treacherous in spirit. The story of how one of our tame lynxes attacked and nearly killed a poor *lavandera* is told in *Wild Spain*, p. 447.

CHAPTER XXXV

OUR "HOME-MOUNTAINS"

THE SERRANÍA DE RONDA

I. San Cristobal and the *Pinsápo* Region

This mountain-system may be regarded as an outlying eastern extension of the Sierra Neváda. Except at the "Ultimo Suspiro del Moro" there is no actual break, and both in physical features and in fauna the two ranges coincide, while differing essentially from the Sierra Moréna, their immediate neighbour on the north. The Serranía de Ronda, nevertheless, displays distinctive characters which entitle it to a place in this book; it forms, moreover, our "Home-mountains," lying within a thirty-mile ride eastward of Jerez.

PINSÁPO PINE

The outstanding feature is the *massif* — or, in Spanish, *Nucléo Central* — of San Cristobal, which rises to 5800 feet, and stands head and shoulders above its surrounding satellites, an imposing pile of cold grey rock and perpendicular precipice.[1]

Nestling beneath its western bastions lies the Moorish

[1] These mountains are believed to overlie vast store of subterranean wealth in the form of petroleum. Geologists seem agreed upon that; but they differ as to the precise locality of the treasure or whence it may most conveniently be exploited.

hamlet of Benamahoma, whence, housed in friendly quarters, we have oft explored this hill. The route to the summit (which may almost be reached on donkey-back) is by the southern face; for summits, however, merely as such, we have no sort of affection, and never expend one ounce of energy in gaining them, unless they chance to aid a main objective. As to "views," we are sure to enjoy these from other points quite as effective.

New-fallen snow powdered the ground and mantled the surrounding peaks as we rode out of Benamahoma on March 20. But the sun shone bright, and from a poplar softly warbled a rock-bunting—with pearl-grey head, triple banded. Serins and kitty-wrens sang from the wooded slopes, and we observed long-tailed tits, with cirl-buntings and woodlarks. A grey wagtail by the burnside was already acquiring the black throat of spring.

ROCK-BUNTING
(*Emberiza cia*)

The tortuous track writhes upwards through sporadic cultivation—the angles at which these hill-men can work a plough amaze, beans and *garbanzos* grow on slopes where no ordinary biped could maintain a foothold. The industry of mountaineers (here as elsewhere in Spain) is remarkable. Each tillable patch, however small or abrupt, is reduced to service, its million stones removed and utilised to form the foundation for a tiny *era*, or threshing-floor (like a shelf on the hillside), whereon the hard-won crop is threshed with flails. Higher out on the hills rude stone sheilings are erected to serve as shelters during seed-time and harvest. Not even the hardy Norseman puts up a tougher tussle with nature to wrest her fruits from the earth.

Presently one enters forests of oak and ilex with strange misshapen trunks, stunted and hollow, but decorated with prehensile convolvulus and mistletoe—many three-fourths dead, mere shells with cavernous interior, sheltering tufts of ferns. Here, instead of destroying the whole tree, charcoal-burners pollard and lop; huge lateral limbs are amputated as they grow, and the result, during centuries, produces these montrosities, rarely exceeding twenty feet in height and surmounted by a

delicate superstructure of branches totally disproportionate. No more fantastic forms can be conceived than these bloated boles, wrestling, as it were, with death, yet still able to transmit life to the superstruction above. They recall the Baobab trees of Central Africa. In neither case is the effect absolutely displeasing, albeit grotesque. Both may be described as deformed rather than disfigured.

On rounding the northern shoulder of the mountain, suddenly the whole scene changes. Instead of limb-lopped trunks, one is faced by the dark foliage of the pinsápo pine—a forest monarch whose stately growth strikes one's eye as something conspicuously new. And new indeed it is. For the range of this great Spanish pine (*Abies pinsapo*) is limited not merely to Spain, but actually to this one mountain-range, the Serrania de Ronda—there may exist more remarkable examples of a restricted distribution, but none certainly that we have come across. The pinsápo, moreover, affects even here but three spots: first, San Cristobal itself; secondly, the Sierra de las Nieves, a mountain plainly visible some thirty miles to the eastward (all its northern corries darkened by pinsápos); and, lastly, the Sierra Bermeja on the Mediterranean, distant thirty to thirty-five miles S.S.E. On each of the three the pinsápo grows in forests; on adjacent hills we have observed one or two scattered groups—otherwise this pine is found nowhere else on earth.

A curious character of the pinsápo is that it only grows on the northern faces of the hills.

The tree possesses remarkable personality. Though one sees a chance specimen grow up straight as a spruce, yet its normal tendency is to "flatten out" on top, whence three, four, even a dozen independent "leaders" spring away, each with equal vigour, and finally form as many distinct vertical trunks, say six or eight separate pines all arising from a common base.

To see the pinsápo in its pristine majesty and massiveness, one must ascend beyond the range of charcoal-burners; up there flourish gigantic specimens, some of which we measured (by rough pacing) to encompass ten to fifteen yards of base. These trees grow from screes of broken rock—great blocks of white dolomite; but the deep-searching tap-roots penetrate to black alluvia beneath. Other huge pines found roothold in walls of living rock. The three sketches, made from individual trees (presumed

for the purpose to be divested of foliage), illustrate the singular multiple growth described.

The foliage of the pinsápo differs from ordinary pine-needles, being rather a series of stiff outstanding spines analogous to those of the Araucaria. They display a crimson efflorescence in March, developing into clusters of red cones by April, and ripening in August to September.[1]

The pinsápo-forests are subject to terrible destruction alike

PINSÁPO PINES (*Abies pinsapo*)

Diagram to show trunk-plan, divested of foliage. Girth at base 30 to 45 feet.

by hatchet and fire, tempest and avalanche. Forest-fires sweep whole glens; while rock-slides overwhelm and uproot even the biggest trees by scores. Few scenes that we have witnessed are more eloquent of nature's violence than these traces of an avalanche. Mammoth skeletons, weird and weather-blanched, protrude by the hundred from chaotic rock-ruin—some still upright, others overthrown or half submerged in debris, yet

[1] We have a number of pinsápos growing in Northumberland. They were planted some ten years ago on a cold northern exposure, and are now flourishing vigorously, some having reached a height of eight or ten feet. Nearly all tend to throw up numerous "leaders" as described.

stretching great white arms heavenward, as though in agonised appeal. The distant roar of an avalanche is a not infrequent sound throughout the mountain-land.

The pinsápo-forests of San Cristobal present one of the most striking mountain-landscapes in Andalucia. For some three miles they cover in a semicircle the whole scooped-out amphitheatre of the mountain-side. Their dark-green masses, contrasted against the white rocks on which they grow—and in winter with yet whiter snow—cluster upwards, tier above tier, from below the 3000-feet level away to the extreme summit of the knife-

CROSSBILL
Wrestling with pine-cone.

edged ridge above, say 5500 feet. Would that we could depict the beauty of the scene.

Through these dark forests a track winds, and here again the evident industry of the mountaineers surprised. At intervals along this pathway lay great baulks of pine-timber (sleepers, planks, and poles), dressed and piled ready for transport. That such loads could be carried hence on donkey-back, or, were such possible, that the labour could be repaid, appeared incredible—so distant are markets and so heavy the cargo.[1]

We had hoped to find in these forests a home of the Spanish crossbill, but not a sign of it rewarded our search. To avail the

[1] Pinsápo timber is fairly hard, but too "knotty" for general purposes, and it is useless for charcoal. Yet these glorious forests are being sacrificed wholesale because the wood affords "good kindling" for the charcoal-furnace—can wasteful wantonness further go? That the only existing forests of the kind on earth should be ruthlessly destroyed for no single object but to provide *kindling* passes understanding.

ripe fruit, the crossbill would need to nest in autumn, and that (wide as is the latitude of its breeding-season) is too much even for the *Pico-tuerto*. An interesting species found here in March was the cole-tit (*Parus pinsapinensis?*), which climbed around us, swinging from twigs within a yard as we sat at lunch. Blackstarts abounded, also firecrests. The latter have a pretty habit of engaging in aërial struggle—whether for love or war—both falling locked together to earth, as blue-tits do. On one such occasion a male, ere taking wing, spread out his flaming crown fanlike, as it were a halo.

Beyond the pinsápo-forests succeeds a region of wiry esparto-grass, up which we climbed to yet more sterile zones above. Here cruel rocks are adorned with a dwarf sword-broom, steel-tipped, a thorny berberis, and vicious pin-cushion gorse that protects its newer growths (not that there is anything tender about it at any stage) by a delicate grey tracery that deceives a careless eye. For that subtle tracery is, in fact, the indurated malice of last year's spikey armour. No handhold does nature here vouchsafe.

Curiously, we noticed woodlarks up here, while blackstarts abounded as titlarks on a Northumbrian moor. In an ivy-clad gorge at 4200 feet we found two nearly completed nests in rock crevices: one occupied a vertical fissure that needed quite twelve inches of packed moss to provide a foundation, the cup-shaped nest being superimposed. But it was not till a month later (April 24) that these birds were laying in earnest.

At 5000 feet the "Piorno" (*Spartius scorpius*) began to grow, a red-stemmed shrub, known locally as *Leche-interna*, and on breaking it, the twigs are found to be filled with a milky fluid that justifies the name. The piorno we have never found growing except on the high tops of Grédos and other lofty sierras, where it forms a chief food of the Spanish ibex, its presence being, in fact, always associated with that of the wild-goat. Alas! that here, on San Cristobal, that association has been severed—another instance of the heedless improvidence that marks the Spanish race. Fifteen years ago they destroyed the last ibex; fifteen years hence they will have destroyed the last pinsápo!

Once for brief moments a broad-horned head, peering over the topmost crags, lent joyous hope that after all an ibex or two might yet survive. But the intruder proved to be one of

the dark-brown rams of *Ovis bidens* that, in semi-feral state, roam these peaks.

San Cristobal itself now holds no big game; though ibex are found but a few leagues to the eastward, and, we rejoice to add (on certain sierras where protection is afforded them), begin to increase. The Serranía de Ronda, like Nevádа, of which it is an extension, has never held either boar or deer; both are too rocky and precipitous to shelter those animals, though both boar and roe are found in the lower hills towards Jerez.

Just below the highest peak, the Cumbre de San Cristobal, lies a curious little alpine meadow. It is only forty yards square, and while we rested, lunching, on unaccustomed level a golden eagle swept overhead, chased and hustled by a mob of choughs that colonise these crags. Ten minutes later a lammergeyer afforded a second glorious spectacle, speeding through space on pinions rigidly motionless, but strongly reflexed, as is usual on a descending gradient. Only once, as far as eye could follow, was one great wing gently deflected, and that merely from the "wrist."

LAMMERGEYER OVERHEAD

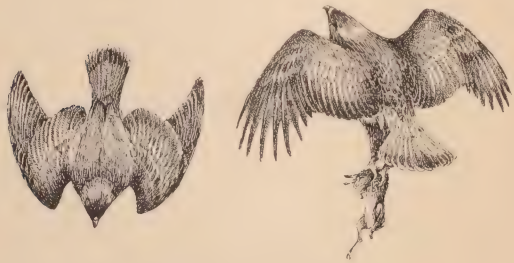
Gliding high on down-grade with rigid reflexed wings, outer primaries in-drawn, fan-wise.

On reaching a crest above, two lammergeyers appeared, the first carrying a long stick or thin bone athwart his beak; the second held a course direct to where L. sat on the ridge, coming so near that the rustle of huge wings sounded menacingly and the white head, golden breast, and hoary shoulders showed clear as in a picture. We expected to find the eyrie somewhere hard by, but in this we were mistaken—once more. It was not on that hill, nor the next; but on a third![1]

We discovered the nest of our friends, the golden eagles. It was situate quite two miles away, in a vertical pulpit-shaped

[1] We mention, parenthetically, certain birds observed at end of March on that alpine meadow (4800 feet), as follows:—One ring-ouzel, a pair of common wheatears, woodlarks, and Dartford warblers—all, no doubt, on migration—besides, of course, blackchats, blue thrushes, etc. A month later the beautiful rock-thrush had come to grace the desolation with lilting flight and song, and tawny pipits ran blithely among the rocks.

rock-stack, that stood forth in a terribly steep scree. From a cavern in the face of this (prettily overhung by a clump of red-berried mistletoe) flew the male eagle. From below, the eyrie was accessible to within a dozen feet; but that interval proved impassable. In the evening we returned with the rope, and having made this fast above, L. was about to ascend from below, when the man left in charge at the top (probably misunderstanding his instructions) let all go, and down came the rope clattering at our feet! It was too late to rectify the blunder that night, and a month elapsed ere we would revisit the spot. Then this curious result ensued. The eagles, we found, had so bitterly



GOLDEN EAGLE HUNTING

(1) The "stoop"—quite vertical. (2) "Got him."

resented the indignity of a rope having been (even momentarily) stretched athwart their portals that they had abandoned their stronghold, leaving two handsome eggs, partly incubated. Their eyrie was eight feet deep, its entrance partly overgrown with ivy and (as above mentioned) overhung by red-berried mistletoe growing on a wild-cherry- the nest built of sticks, lined with esparto, and adorned with green ivy-leaves and twigs of pinsápo.

The golden eagle is still common, ornamenting with majestic flight every sierra in Spain. For eagles are notoriously difficult to kill, and, when killed, cannot be eaten; so the goat-herd, with characteristic apathy and Arab fatalism, suffers the ravages on his kids and contents himself with an oath. Only once have we found a nest in a tree; it was a giant oak, impending a

ravine so precipitous that from the eyrie you could drop a pebble into a torrent 200 feet below. Usually their nests are in the crags, vast accumulations of sticks conspicuously projecting, and generally in pairs, perhaps 100 yards apart, and which are occupied in alternate years. Eggs are laid by mid-March, but the young hardly fly before June. It was in this sierra that we made the sketches of golden eagles from life, here and at p. 317.

Bonelli's eagle is another beautiful mountain-haunting species, but of it we treat elsewhere.

From the knife-edged ridge above our eagle's eyrie (height 5500 feet) we enjoyed a memorable view. Due south, 50 miles away, beyond the jumbled Spanish sierras, lay Gibraltar, recognisable by its broken back, but looking puny and inconsiderable amidst vaster heights. Beyond it—beyond Tetuan, in fact—rose Mount Anna, an 8000-feet African mountain; to the right, Gebel-Musa and all the Moorish coast to Cape Spartel, the straits between showing dim and insignificant. To the eastward, beyond the Sierra de las Nieves aforesaid, stands out boldly the long white snow-line of Nevada, its majesty undimmed by distance and 140 miles of intervening atmosphere. To the west we distinguish Jerez, 40 miles away, and beyond it the shining Atlantic.

From one point there lies almost perpendicularly below, the curious mediæval village of Grazalema, jammed in between two vast cinder-grey rock-faces—its narrow streets, white houses, and india-red roofs resembling nothing so much as a toy town. No space for "back-streets," each house faces both ways; yet Grazalema is one of the cleanest spots we have struck—how they manage that, we know not.

Immediately beneath Grazalema is a bird-crag that contains a regular "choughery," hundreds of these red-billed corvines nesting in its caves and crevices. As neighbours they had lesser kestrels and rock-sparrows (*Petronia stulta*), while the roofs of the caverns were plastered with the mud nests of crag-martins. We also noticed here alpine swifts, and a great frilled lizard escaped us amid broken rocks.

Within the limits of a chapter even the more notable spots of a great serrania cannot all find place; but the rock-gorge known as the Yna de la Garganta will not be overpassed, though no words of ours can convey the stupendous nature of this place,

a chasm riven right through the earth's crust till its depths are invisible from above; and overshadowed by encircling walls of sheer red crags, broken horizontally at intervals, thus forming, as it were, tier above tier, and flanked by a series of bastions and flying buttresses apparently provided to support the vast superstructure above.

By climbing along the rugged central tier, one overlooks from its apex, as from the reserved seats of a dress-circle, the whole domestic economy of a vulture city in being. Every ledge in that abyss was crowded; many vultures sat brooding, their heads laid flat on the rock or tucked under the point of a wing. Elsewhere a single grey-white chick, or a huge white egg, lay in full view on the open ledge, nestled, apparently, on bare earth; and behind these each niche or cavern had its tenant. The rocks around a nest were often stained blood-red, and one vulture arrived carrying a mass of what appeared carrion in its claws. Another brought a wisp of dry esparto-grass athwart her beak and deposited it in her nest.[1]

"WING-DRYING"

While we watched this scene a smart thunderstorm passed over, with the result that shortly afterwards the vultures spread their huge wings to dry, displaying attitudes some of which we endeavour to sketch — see also p. 9.

The descent into the unseen depths beneath was rewarded, despite a terrible scramble —part of the way on a rope—by discovering a fairy grotto filled with pink, azure, and opalescent stalactites and stalagmites.

[1] Note that the pellets or "castings" thrown up by vultures are chiefly formed of grass cut up into lengths and compacted with saliva, evidently digestive. We have frequently seen vultures carrying a wisp of grass in their beaks.

The bed of the canyon, which from above had appeared to be paved with sand, now proved to consist of boulders ten feet high. After threading a devious course through these for half-a-mile we reached the mouth of the grotto. Its width would be nearly 200 feet and height about half that, the form roughly resembling the quarter of a cocoa-nut. The dome, in delicate colouring, passes description—the apex bright salmon-pink, changing, as it passed inwards, first into clear emerald, then to dark green, and finally to indigo; while the reflected sunlight filtering down between the rock-walls of the canyon caused phantasmagoric effects such as, one thought, existed only in fairyland. The cavern was backed by pillars of stalactites resembling the pipes of a mighty organ, and of so soft and feathery a texture that it was surprising, on touching them, to find hard rock. The floor also was composed of great smooth stalagmites, deep brown in colour.

From outside, one saw the sky as through a narrow rift between the perpendicular walls which towered up 300 feet; and above that level there again uprose the vultures' cliffs already described.

One evening we detected afar a cavern which showed signs of being the present abode of a lammergeyer. Ere reaching it, however, a keen eye descried one of these birds in the heavens at an altitude that dwarfed the great *Gypaëtus* to the size of a humble kestrel. Presently, after many descending sweeps, the lammergeyer entered another cavern 2000 feet higher up—in fact, close under the sky-line, among some scanty pinsápos. The hour was 4 P.M., and after a long day's scramble, the writer shied at a fresh ascent. Not so my companion, L., who set off at a run, and within an hour had reached the eyrie. It proved empty, though the leg of a freshly killed kid lay half across the nest. This was presumably the alternative site, used, this year, merely as a larder; but time did not that night admit of further search.

The writer beguiled the two-hours interval in interviewing a wild gipsy-eyed girl of twelve, whose name was Joséfa Aguilár, and whose vocation in life to attend a herd of swine. Throughout Spain, whether on mountain or plain, one sees this thing—a small boy or girl spending the livelong day in solitary charge of dumb beasts, goats or pigs, even turkeys—and the sight ever

causes me a pang of regret. Probably I am quite wrong, but such hardly seems a human vocation—certainly it leads nowhere. In intervals of pelting her recalcitrant charges with stones, Joséfa told me she lived in a reed-hut which was close by, but so small that I had overlooked its existence: that she never went to school or had been farther from home than Zahara, a village some few miles away. She asked if I was from Grazalema, and on being told from England, she repeated the word "Inglaterra" again and again, while her bright black eyes became almost sessile with

LAMMERGEYER ENTERING EYRIE

wonderment. Joséfa's frock was hanging in tatters, torn to bits by the thorny scrub. I gave her some coppers to buy a new one, and with a little joyous scream Joséfa vanished among the bush.

Darkness was closing in ere I. returned; then great thunder-clouds rolled up, obscuring the moon, and oh! what we suffered those next three hours, scrambling over rock and ridge, through forest and thicket—all in inky darkness and under a deluge of rain.

On returning to this remote ridge (having ascended from the opposite face), we soon renewed our friendship with the lammergeyer—when first seen, it was being mobbed by an impudent chough. Then it sailed up the deep gorge below us, passing close in front, and after clearing an angle of the hill, wheeled inwards

and with gently closing wings plunged into a cavern in the crag. We felt we had our object assured; yet on examining these mighty piles of rocks—a couple of hours' stiff climbing—it was evident we were mistaken, for no nest, past or present, did they reveal. It was on yet a third stupendous crag, quite a mile from the alternative site first discovered, that this year these lammergeyers had fixed their home. The nest was in quite a small cave in the rock-face; more often (as described in *Wild Spain*) the lammergeyer prefers a huge cavern in the centre of which is piled an immense mass of sticks, heather-stalks, and other rubbish—the accumulation of years—and lined with esparto-grass and wool. The eggs always number two and are richly coloured, whereas the griffon lays but one, and that white. Although laying takes place as early as January, yet the young are unable to fly before June. Our principal object this year was to sketch the lammergeyer in life, and in this several rough portraits serve to show that we succeeded —so far as in us lies.

. . . . . .

There remain notes of later vernal developments in these beautiful sierras; but alas! this chapter is already too long, so over the taffrail they go.

CHAPTER XXXVI

SERRÀNÍA DE RONDA (*Continued*)

II. THE SIERRA BERMEJA

THE Sierra Bermeja, standing on Mediterranean shore, demands a page or two if only because it affords a home to three of Spain's peculiar and rarer guests—the pinsápo, the ibex, and the lammergeyer.

Our earlier experience in Bermeja, our efforts to study its ibex—and to secure a specimen or two—are told in *Wild Spain*. Suffice it here to say that the characteristic of these Mediterranean mountains is that here the ibex habitually live, and even lie-up (as hares do), among the scrubby brushwood of the hills—a remarkable deviation from their observed habits elsewhere, whether in Spain, the Caucasus and Himalayas, or wherever ibex are found. But since brushwood clothes Bermeja and other Mediterranean hills to their topmost heights, the local wild-goats have literally no choice in the matter. Still, such a habitat must strike a hunter's eye as abnormal, and is, in fact, a curious instance of "adaptation to environment."[1]

During December 1907 we spent some days in Bermeja in an attempt to stalk the ibex—a difficult undertaking when game is always three-parts hidden by scrub. On former occasions we had secured a specimen of two by stalking (here called *raspagéo*) and "driving"; but whatever chance there might have been was this time annihilated by incessant mists enshrouding the heights in opaque screen. Thus another carefully organised expedition and unstinted labour were once more thrown away!

On December 19 we drove the "Pinsapal." This, commencing

[1] The Spanish name of the ibex, *Cabra montés*, signifies, not as might appear, "mountain-goat," but *scrub-goat*; and may have originated in this region, or at least from a habit which prevails here though obsolete everywhere else.

near the highest tops, 5000 feet, extends down a tremendous conch-shaped ravine, merging at the base into pine-forests—chiefly,

LAMMERGEYER
[Drawn from life in Sierra Bermeja, March 1891.]

we believe, *Pinus pinaster*. This "drive" lasted two hours, mist sometimes densely thick, at others clearing a little; but only allowing a view varying from twenty to eighty yards.

This, coupled with constant drip from the gigantic pinsápos and a bitter wind blowing through clothes already soaked, was . . . well, comfortless and pretty hopeless to boot. Twice the dogs gave tongue—and it could be nothing but ibex here: while D., who was posted on the left, heard the rattling of hoofs as a herd passed within, as he reckoned, 200 yards. A second lot, followed by dogs, was heard though not seen on the extreme right. The pinsápos at this season, and in such weather, form a favourite resort, for we saw more sign hereabouts than on the high tops. A *levante* wind in winter always means mist—and failure.

The ibex in winter hold the high ground unless driven down by snow. In spring and summer they come lower—even to cork-oak levels—presumably to avoid contact with tame goats, then pasturing on the tops.

The east wind and fog continuing a whole week, though we tried all we knew, every effort was frustrated by atmospheric obstruction. To drive ibex successfully, the skilled training of the dogs is essential. Formerly there were goat-herds who possessed clever dogs of great local repute. But these days of "free-shooting" have passed away, and the ibex of Bermeja with those of other Spanish sierras have recently fallen under the beneficent ægis of "protection."

Bird-life in winter is scarce. We noticed a few redwings feeding on berries; jays, partridges, and many wood-pigeons picking up acorns. Vultures rarely appear here, but both golden and Bonelli's eagles were observed, and in one mountain-gorge a pair of lammergeyers have their stronghold, where in 1891 we examined both their eyries, one containing a young *Gypaëtus* as big as a turkey. That was in March, at which season hawfinches abounded in the pines, and at dawn the melody of the blue thrush recalled Scandinavian springs and the redwing's song. Another small bird caused recurrent annoyance while ibex-driving. With a loud "Rat, tat, tat," resembling the patter of horny hoofs on rock, its song commences; then follows a hissing note as of a heavy body passing through brushwood—for an instant one expects the coveted game to appear. No, confound that bird! it's only a blackstart.

We extract the following scene from *Wild Spain*:—

On the lifting of a cloud-bank which rested on the mountain-side, I descried four ibex standing on a projecting rock in bold relief about

400 yards away. The intervening ground was rugged—rocks and brushwood with scattered pines—and except the first 50 yards, the stalk offered no difficulty. I had passed the dangerous bit, and was already within 200 yards, when in a moment the wet mist settled down again and I saw the game no more. Curiously, on the fog first lifting, an eagle sat all bedraggled and woe-begone on a rock-point hard by, his feathers fluffed out and a great yellow talon protruding, as it seemed, from the centre of his chest. Then a faint sun-ray played on his bronzed plumage: he shook himself and launched forth in air, sweeping downwards—luckily without moving the ibex, though they took note of the circumstance.

In the lower forests here are some pig and roe-deer. A far greater stronghold, however, for both these game-animals is at Almoraima, belonging to the Duke of Medinaceli, some six or eight leagues to the westward. Almoraima covers a vast extent of wild mountainous land of no great elevations generally, but all wooded and jungle-clad. On the lower levels grow immense cork-forests. Here, during a series of *monterías* in February 1910, in which the writer, to his lasting regret, was prevented from taking part, a total of 19 roe-deer and 52 boars was secured. The two best roebuck heads measured as follows:—

	Length (outside curve).	Circumference.	Tip to Tip.
No. 1 . . .	$9\frac{1}{2}$″	$3\frac{1}{4}$″	$3\frac{5}{8}$″
No. 2 . . .	$9\frac{1}{4}$″	$4\frac{3}{8}$″	3″

III. Sierra de Jerez

These mountains (being within sight of our home) formed the scene of our earliest sporting ventures in Spain. It is forty years ago now, yet do we not forget that first day and its anxieties, as we rode by crevices that serve for bridle-paths, along with a too jovial hill-farmer, Barréa by name, who persisted in carrying a loaded gun swinging haphazard and full-cock in the saddle-slings—that it was loaded we saw by the shiny copper cap on each nipple! Our objects that day were boar and roe-deer; but presently a partridge was descried sprinting up the rugged screes above. Out came the ready gun, and next moment all that remained of that partridge was a cloud of feathers and scattered anatomy. The ball had gone true. Barréa casually shouted to a lad to pick up the pieces, himself riding on as though such practice was an everyday affair. My own experience of ball-

shooting being then limited, I reflected that if such were Spanish marksmanship, I might be left behind! On assembling for lunch, however, some vultures were wheeling high overhead, and it occurred to me to try my luck. By precisely a similar fluke, one huge griffon collapsed to the shot, and swirling round and round like a parachute, occupied (it seemed) five minutes in reaching the ground—1000 feet below us.

That afternoon the antics of two strange beasties attracted my attention and again my ball went straight. The victim was a mongoose, and with some pride I had the specimen carefully stowed in the mule-panniers—never to see it more! The mongoose, we now know, owing to its habit of eating snakes, has acquired a personal aroma surpassing in pungency that of any other beast of the field, and our men, so soon as my back was turned, had discreetly thrown out the malodorous trophy.

A boar-shooting trip to the Sierra de Jerez formed the first sporting venture in which the authors were jointly engaged; for which reason (though the memory dates back to March 1872) we may be forgiven for extracting a brief summary from *Wild Spain*:—

Our quarters were a little white rancho perched amid deep bush and oak-woods on the slope of the Sierra del Valle. A mile farther up the valley was closed by the dark transverse mass of the Sierra de las Cabras, the two ranges being separated by an abrupt chasm called the Boca de la Foz, which was to be the scene of this day's operations.

A pitiable episode occurred. While preparing to mount, there resounded from behind a peal of strange inhuman laughter, followed by incoherent words: and through an iron-barred window we discerned the emaciated figure of a man, wild and unkempt, whose eagle-like claws grasped the barriers of his cell—a poor lunatic. No connected replies could we get, nothing beyond vacuous laughter and gibbering chatter. Now he was at the theatre and quoted magic jargon; anon supplicating the mercy of a judge; then singing a stanza of some old song, to break off abruptly into fierce denunciation of one of *us* as the cause of his troubles. Poor wretch! he had once been a successful advocate; but signs of madness having developed, which increased with years, the once popular lawyer was reduced to the durance of this iron-girt cell, his only share and view of God's earth just so much of sombre everlasting sierra as the narrow opening allowed. We were warned that any effort to ameliorate his lot was hopeless, his case being desperate. What hidden wrongs may exist in a land where no judicial intervention is obligatory

between the "rights of families" and their insane relations (or those whom they may consider such) are easy to conceive.

The first covert tried was a strong jungle flanking the main gorge, but this and a second beat proved blank, though two roebuck broke back. The third drive comprised the main *manchas*, or thickets, of the Boca de la Foz, and to this we ascended on foot, leaving the horses picketed behind. Our four guns occupied the rim of a natural amphitheatre which dipped sharply away some 1500 feet beneath us, the centre choked with brushwood—lentisk, arbutus, and thorn—20 feet deep. On our left towered a perpendicular block of limestone cliffs, the right flank of the jungle being bordered by a series of up-tilted rock-strata, white as marble and resembling a ruined street.

Ten minutes of profound silence, not a sound save the distant tinkle of a goat-bell, or the song of that feathered recluse, the blue rock-thrush (in Spanish, *Solitario*), then the distant cries of the beaters in the depths below told us the fray had begun.

Another ten minutes' suspense. Then a crash of hound-music proclaimed that the quarry was at home. This boar proved to be one of certain grizzly monsters of which we were specially in search, his lair a jumble of boulders islanded amid thickest jungle. Here he held his ground, declining to recognise in canine aggressors a superior force. Two boar-hounds reinforced the skirmishers of the pack, yet the old tusker stood firm. For minutes that seemed like hours the conflict raged stationary: the sonorous baying of the boar-hounds, the "yapping" of the smaller dogs, and shouts of mountaineers blended with the howl of an incautious *podenco* as he received a death-rip—all formed a chorus of sounds that carried their exciting story to the sentinel guns above.

The seat of war being near half-a-mile away, no immediate issue was expected. Then there occurred one crash of bush, and a second boar dashed straight for the pass where the writer barred the way. The suddenness of the encounter disconcerted, and the first shot missed—the bullet splashing on a grey rock just above—time barely remained to jump aside and avoid collision. The left barrel got home: a stumble and a savage grunt as an ounce of lead penetrated his vitals, and the boar plunged headlong, his life-blood dyeing the weather-blanched rocks and green palmetto. For a moment he lay, but ere cold steel could administer a quietus, he had regained his feet and dashed back. Whether revenge prompted that move or it was merely an effort to regain the covert he had just left, we know not—a third bullet laid him lifeless.

During this interlude (though it only occupied five seconds) the main combat below reached its climax. The old boar had left his stronghold, and after sundry sullen stands and promiscuous skirmishes (during which a second *podenco* died), he made for the heights. Showing first on the centre, he was covered for a moment by a ·450 Express; but, not breaking covert, no shot could be fired, and when next viewed the boar

was trotting up a stone-slide on the extreme left. Here a rifle-shot broke a foreleg, and the disabled beast, unable to face the hill, retreated to the thicket below, scattering dogs and beaters in headlong flight. And now commenced the hue and cry—the real hard work for those who meant to see the end and earn the spoils of war. Presently *Moro's* deep voice told us of the boar at bay, far away down in the depths of the defile. What followed in that hurly-burly that mad scramble through brake and thicket, down crag and scree—cannot be written. Each man only knows what he did himself, or did not do. We can answer for three. One of these seated himself on a rock and lit a cigarette. The others, ten minutes later, arrived on the final scene, one minus his nether garments and sundry patches of skin, but in time to take part in the death of as grand a boar as roams the Spanish sierras.

This last spring (1910), after thirty-eight years, we revisited the Boca de la Foz, partly to reassure ourselves that the above description was not overdrawn. No! 'Tis a terrible wild gorge, the Foz, but the days when we can follow a wounded boar through obstacles such as those have passed away. The boars, we were told, are still there, and so are the vultures in those magnificent crags. We climbed along the ledges and there were the great stick-built nests, each in its ancestral site. In March each contains a single egg; now (April) that is replaced by a leaden-hued chick. These cliffs are also tenanted by ravens and a single pair of choughs. Neophrons occupied the same cavern whence I shot a female in 1872, and crag-martins held their old abodes, plastered on to the roofs of the caves.

As April advances a new and striking bird-form arrives to adorn the higher sierras—the least observant can scarce miss this, the rock-thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*), conspicuous alike in plumage and actions; with clear blue head and chestnut breast, its colour-scheme includes a broad patch of white set in the centre of a dark back. The contrast is most effective, and, so far as we know, this "fashion" of a white back is unique among birds, unless indeed it be shared by Bonelli's eagle. The rock-thrush is also endowed with a lovely wild song, quite low and simple, but replete with a fine "high-tops" quality. By April 20 he yields to vernal impulses, and his courting is pretty to see: wheeling around on transparent pinions, he soars and sings the livelong day; at intervals, with collapsed wing, he drops like a stone to join his sober-hued mate among the rocks; a few picturesque poses, displaying all those flashing tints of orange

and opal, and off he goes again to soar and sing once more. His cousin, the blue-thrush, has also a sweet song and a similar hovering flight, ending in a "drop act"; but the ascent is more vertical, while frequently he varies the descent and comes fluttering down in tree-pipit or butterfly-like style. Even the sober little blackchat now "shows off," perched on some boulder with quivering wings and tail spread fan-like over his back. Both these two last, being resident, nest much earlier than the migratory rock-thrush: the latter was building (in crevices of the rocks) by mid-April, but hardly lays before May.

These sierras being only 3000 to 4000 feet, one misses here some of the alpine forms observed at higher altitudes. The tawny pipit, for example, a sandy-hued bird with dark eye-stripe and active wagtail-like gait, which was common on San Cristobal at 4500 feet in April, never showed up here at all; nor did any of the following species, all so characteristic of the higher ground: Blackstarts, woodlarks, rock-buntings, cole- and longtail-tits, and tree-creepers. The choughs, spotted woodpeckers, rock-thrushes, crag-martins, and wood-pigeons, though observed, were here very much scarcer. The lammergeyer, too, rarely descends here, and then only while in his smoke-black uniform of immaturity.

The Puerta de Palomas

In May 1883, while returning from Ubrique, our horses fell lame owing to loss of shoes, and for four days and nights we were encamped in the pass known as the Puerta de Palomas. There is a tiny *ventorillo*, or wayside wine-shop, at the foot of the pass; but nights are warm in May, and we preferred the freedom of the open hill, where the strange growls made by the griffons at dawn, together with the awakening carol of the rock-thrush, formed our reveille each morning in that roofless bedroom amidst the boulders.

The opposite side of the pass is dominated by the picturesque pile called the Picacho del Aljibe, a conical peak that towers in tiers of crags above the adjoining sierras not unlike a gigantic Arthur's Seat over the Salisbury Crags. Our own side was rather a chaotic jumble of detached monoliths than cliffs proper, and by clambering over these we reached in one morning sixteen vultures' nests, the easiest of access we ever struck. They were mostly very slight affairs, bare rock often protruding through the

scanty structure; though, where necessary, a broad platform of sticks was provided—as sketched. The poults (only one in each nest) were now as big as guinea-fowls, with brown feathers sprouting through the white down. These eyries, albeit slightly malodorous, are always strictly cleanly, since vultures feed their young by disgorging half-digested food from their own crops, and we watched this not-pleasing operation being performed within some eighty yards' distance; hence there is no carrion or putrefying matter lying about, as is the case with the neophron and lammergeyer.

GRIFFON VULTURE FEEDING YOUNG—PUERTA DE PALOMAS, April 10, 1910.

These eyries were situate on three great outstanding stacks of rock, and during the scramble we came face to face with a pair of eagle-owls solemnly dreaming away the hours in the recesses of a cavern, though no sign of a nest was discovered. The caves were shared by crag-martins, whose swallow-like nests were fixed under the roof, usually just beyond reach. Their eggs are white, flecked with grey. On May 18 we obtained here a nest of the rock-thrush with five beautiful greenish-blue eggs. It was built in a cranny of the crags.

This year (1910) found us once more in the Puerta de Palomas, the date April 8. On rounding the Sierra de las Cabras, as L. was already far up the hillside, I rode forward intending to ascend at the north end and work back, thus meeting in centre. A succession of mischances, however, upset that plan. A small clump of ilex clung to the steep above the point whereat I had left the horses, and in traversing this, I walked right into a calf concealed beneath a lentiscus. Knowing that this might involve trouble should its half-wild mother be within hearing, I gently retreated,

but, hard by, stumbled on a second calf, even smaller, in another bush. No. 1 meanwhile had gained its legs and bleated softly. There followed a crash among the bush above, and as fierce-looking a wild beast as ever I saw (and I have seen some) came hurtling down those rugged rocks at amazing speed. On seeing me (luckily some little distance from her own offspring) the infuriated mother pulled up, full-face—a pretty picture, but rather menacing, especially as she kept up a muttered bellowing, horribly eloquent. I had sidled alongside a tree; but Paco, who carried my gun, with the reckless spirit begotten of the bull-fight, boldly addressed the enemy in opprobrious terms. The only result was that she came still nearer, and I swung to a lower branch. Paco, nothing daunted, now tried stones (in addition to expletives), and it was, to me at least, a relief when that cow at length retired. The half-wild savage may easily be more dangerous than the truly wild. The former have lost some of their pristine respect for man, and of course one has less means of defence.

This incident over, we commenced the climb. The rock-stack rose vertically above us, but we diverged to the right as affording an easier route. On reaching the desired level, however, I found it impossible to make good that interval on our left—a smooth rock-face devoid of handhold, and too upright to traverse, forbade all lateral movement. Up we went another twenty yards, then another; but always to find that slithery rock-face mocking our efforts to outflank it. We were now well above the rock-stack overlooking the eyries, and I could see two griffons brooding, another feeding a poult close by. But between us was a great gulf fixed, and that gulf stopped us. The obvious alternative was to descend and try again from a fresh point. But here a new difficulty faced us: we could not descend. We had come up by following a series of vertical fissures, or "chimnies," none too easy, since every crevice sheltered some vicious vegetation, each more spikey and thorny than the last. Still from *below* one can always select a handhold somewhere, and then defy the thorn; whereas on looking *backwards*, nothing is visible but a vanishing outline of rock and gorse, porcupine broom, or palmetto—beyond is vacant space, and a sheer drop at that. In a word, we could neither descend nor move laterally. It was humiliating—even more so than the antecedent incident with a *COW*!

One resource remained—to climb on to the top; and even in that direction a single bad rock might cut off escape. No such crowning catastrophe befell, but it was tooth-and-claw work, every yard of it, and the vertical height could not have been less than 1000 feet.

While thus "clawing up" I recollect passing a perfect glory in orchids—great twin purple blooms, golden-tipped and quite amorphous in outline. They grew just beyond my reach. Curious recumbent ferns clung to the rocks; anemones and violet-like bouquets peered from each cranny.

Meanwhile L., approaching from the other side, had examined the rock-stacks and succeeded in attaining one main objective—the nest of the eagle-owl. This was in a rock-cavern, close by that of '83, easy of access—indeed the great owl flew out in his face as he passed below. The cave (four feet high by two wide) was at the foot of a vertical limestone cliff, its floor level with a goat-track that skirted the crag, and fully exposed to view: there was no nest nor any debris. Two young owls in white down, with one egg actually "chipping," lay on the bare earth.

One of the griffon's nests still contained (on April 8) a fresh egg, which is now in the writer's collection as a memorial of that day. We had secured all we had expected in the Puerta de Palomas—and something more besides.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A SPANISH SYSTEM OF FOWLING

THE "CABRESTO" OR STALKING-HORSE

Spain is a land of flocks and herds, of breeders and graziers. At the head of the scale stands the fighting-bull, monarch of the richest *vegas*; at the opposite extreme come the shaggy little ponies and brood-mares that eke out a feral and precarious subsistence in the wildest regions. Throughout the marismas hardy beasts with wild-bred progeny on which no human hand has ever laid, abound, grazing knee-deep in watery wildernesses where tasteless reed or wiry spear-grass afford a bare subsistence.

There they live, splashing in the shadows, heads half-immersed as they pull up subaquatic herbage; on the back of one rides perched a snow-white egret, on another a couple of magpies, preying on ticks or warbles, while all around swim wildfowl that scarce deign to move aside.

No fowler could view such a scene without perceiving that approach to the wildfowl might be effected under cover of these unsuspected ponies. The earliest aucipial mind probably realised the advantage offered, and the system has been practised in Spain from time immemorial.

The method is simple. The ponies (termed, when trained, *cabrestos*, or "decoys") seem by intuition to realise what is required. By a cord attached to the headstall, the fowler, crouching behind the shoulder, directs his pony's course towards the unconscious fowl. At intervals, still further to disarm suspicion, feigned halts are made as though to simulate grazing. Before closing in, the nose-cord is made fast to the near fore-knee, thus holding the pony's head well down. Presently the ducks are within half gunshot, and we amateurs (whose doubled backs ache excruciatingly from a constrained position maintained

for half an hour) pray each moment for relief and the signal to fire. No! Our fowler-friends shoot for a livelihood, and continue, with marvellous skill and patience, so to manœuvre their beasts that the utmost possible target shall finally be presented to the broadside. There is no hurry—nor time nor aching vertebræ with them count one centimo. (See photo at p. 90.)

Should it be necessary to change course, that operation is effected by wheeling the pony stern-on to the fowl, the fowler meanwhile crouching low under his muzzle: critical moments ensue during which the expert has no cover but the pony's breadth—instead of his length—to shield him from detection by hundreds of the keenest eyes on earth. But it is remarkable how little notice is taken of what is necessarily in full view provided that the exposed objects are *beneath* the covering animal. Once let a human head or a gun-barrel appear *above* its outline and the spell is broken. But otherwise—say during those interludes of feigned "grazing"—the suffering fowlers can straighten their backs by squatting down (in the water!) and thus enjoy at closest quarters a spectacle of wild creatures that is impossible to attain by any other means yet discovered. Though the fowlers are now fully visible, framed, as it were, beneath the *cabresto's* belly and between his legs, no notice will be taken or any alarm created so long as the pony's skylines remain unadorned with human appendages. There, within a score of yards, you sit face to face with ducks by the hundred, feeding, splashing, preening—all utterly unconcerned! Those of our readers who are most familiar with wildfowl will best realise how incredible such a statement must read. Ordinarily, the slightest visible movement—the mere glint of a gun-barrel though half masked by cover—suffices to shift every duck at one hundred yards and more. Here they ignore objects practically exposed and close at hand. Apparently the habitual companionship day by day of water-bred ponies has annihilated in their minds all sense of danger arising from such a quarter.

The Spanish professionals (using large but antiquated muzzle-loaders) work singly, each man behind his own pony; or should two or more join forces for a broadside, there still remains but one man behind each animal. These men are reputed to have made extraordinary shots; and having viewed their infinite patience, we can well believe such records. To place two guns

behind one *cabresto*-pony, that is, an amateur as well as the professional, is a distinct handicap. We have done it ourselves, and accepted the handicap merely to see the system in operation; yet by using more powerful weapons have probably killed as many fowl at one shot as even the fabled totals of our friends.

Obviously no comparison can be, or is, suggested as between two totally different performances. It has been solely for the purpose of learning the system, and also of enjoying unequalled views of wildfowl close at hand, that we have occasionally put in a day with the *cabresto*-ponies, and here annex a few records of shots made by this means, taken at random from our diaries.

January 1, 1898.—Fired three broadsides with two guns, a double 8- and a single 4-bore; in the second case the fowl had just been badly scared by a kite. Results:—

(1)	59 wigeon, 3 teal	62
(2)	30 „ 3 „	33
(3)	60 „ 1 „ 4 pintail, 4 shoveler .	69
	Total . .	164

January 31, 1905.—In three shots at wigeon, the first being half spoilt by a big black-backed gull, the authors (two guns) gathered:—

$$27 + 51 + 48 = 126 \text{ wigeon.}$$

December 29, 1893.—Santolalla (2 guns), 78 teal, besides some coots, at a single shot.

January 1894.—Laguna Dulce; three *cabrestos* with Spanish fowlers, and two amateurs with big breech-loaders (a broadside of 5 barrels):—

198 teal (including about a dozen wigeon).

A shot made in January 1894 seems worth recording merely in respect of the numbers killed by only some *seven ounces* of lead. An islet actually *carpeted* with teal was our target, and two 12-bores, aided by an ancient Spanish muzzle-loader (about 10-bore), realised fifty head, to wit, forty-nine teal and one mallard-drake.

Geese will rarely admit of approach to the close quarters necessary for effective work; yet just on those rare exceptional occasions we have secured (using heavy shoulder-guns) from six to a dozen greylags in a day, once or twice more than this—five at a shot being the maximum.

The Stancheon-Gun in Spain

In contrast with the success of the *cabresto* system, the stancheon-gun proved a failure. So admirably adapted for punt-gunning appeared those great shallow marismas, that in 1888 we sent out the entire outfit and artillery for wildfowling afloat—a 22-foot double-handed gunning-punt and an 80-lb. gun to throw 16 oz. of shot.

The little craft reached the Guadalquivir in September, but unforeseen difficulties arose. The Spanish custom-house took alarm. True, the smart little gun-boat was an entire novelty—even in the Millwall docks she had created surprise; here she was incomprehensible. No such vessel had ever floated on Spanish waters, and the official mind needed time to consider. That oracle, after weeks of cogitation, ordered the removal of the suspicious craft from the obscure port of Bonanza to the fuller light that plays on the custom-house at Seville. There, after more weeks of delay, it was decided that the white-painted six-foot barrel was "an arm of war," that "the combination of boat and gun savoured of the mechanism of war," and, finally, that "the boat could not be permitted to pass the customs until it had been registered at the Admiralty." Thus our *Boadicea* joined the Imperial Navy of Spain.

Seven months elapsed whilst these difficulties were in process of solution, and ere they were smoothed away (as difficulties in Spain, or elsewhere, do dissolve under prudent treatment), and the *Boadicea* set free to navigate the marismas, the season had passed and the migrant fowl had returned to the north.

The following autumn, however, it at once became apparent that the venture was a failure. No wildfowl would tolerate her presence within half-a-mile. No sooner had her low snake-like form crept clear of fringing covert than the broad *lucio* in front was in seething tumult, every duck within sight had sprung on wing. Naturally we tried every known plan, but all in vain. A system that is effective on the harassed and hard-shot estuaries of England utterly broke down on the desolate marismas of Spain. The apparent explanation is that whereas fowl at home are accustomed to see passing craft of many kinds, and perhaps mistake the low-lying gunboat for a larger vessel far away; here no craft of any sort navigate the marisma, or should the box-

shape *cajones* of native gunners be so classed, they are at once recognised as wholly and solely hostile.[1]

One plan remained by which the big gun might be brought to bear upon the larger bodies of fowl: concealing the boat among sedges at some point where ducks had been observed to assemble *within reach* of such covert. That, however, to begin with, was most uncertain—the only certainty was that enormous drafts on patience would be required; and, after all, it forms no part of the system of wildfowling afloat and lacks the joys and glories of that pursuit.

Wild Swans in Spain

Since meeting with four hoopers in February 1891, as recorded in *Wild Spain*, we had neither seen nor heard of wild swans in Southern Spain till February of the present year, 1910, when H.R.H. the Duke of Orleans kindly informed us that he had succeeded in shooting one of a pair met with in his marismas of Villamanrique. It proved to be an adult male of Bewick's swan —the first occurrence of that species that has been recorded in Spain.

[1] Similar results followed on the Laguna de Janda. That great shallow lake abounds in winter with both ducks and geese; but differs from the marismas in being sweet water, hence is not frequented by flamingoes. Another point of difference is that its shores are occupied by wild bulls instead of brood-mares; hence the *cabresto*-pony is not available. Wildfowl here also proved inaccessible to a gunning-punt on open waters; while wherever reeds or sedge promised some "advantage," in such places the depth of water was always insufficient to float the lightest of craft within range. The best shot made during four seasons realised but twenty-three (seven geese and sixteen duck)—a paltry total. Occasionally a great bustard was shot from the gunboat.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE "CORROS," OR MASSING OF WILDFOWL IN SPRING FOR THEIR NORTHERN MIGRATION

THE withdrawal of the wildfowl at the vernal equinox affords an unequalled scenic display. It forms, moreover, one of those rare revelations of her inner working that Nature but seldom allows to man. Her operations, as a rule, are essentially secretive. A little may be revealed, the bulk must be inferred. Here, for once, a vast revolution is performed in open daylight, *coram populo*—that is, if the authors and a handful of Spanish fowlers be accepted as representative, since no other witness is present at these scenes enacted in remote watery wilderness.

Up to mid-February the daily life of the marisma continues as already described. From that date a new movement becomes perceptible—the seasonal redistribution. Daily there withdraw northward bands and detachments counting into thousands apiece. But no vacancy occurs since their places are simultaneously filled by corresponding arrivals from beyond the Mediterranean.

It is at this precise epoch that there occurs the phenomenon of which we have spoken.

Towards the close of February, dependent on the moon, a marked climatic change takes place. A period of sudden heat usually sets in—a sequence of warm sunny days, breathless, and at noontide almost suffocating. But each afternoon with flowing tide there arises from the sea a S.W. breeze, gentle at first and uncertain but gaining strength with the rising flood.

Already, shortly before this change, the duck-tribes had partially relaxed their full mid-winter activities—owing to abundant spring growths of food-plants, had become more sedentary; if not sluggish, at least reluctant to move. After the brief morning-flight not a wing stirred. But now, scan the

mirror-like surface of some great *lucio* and you will recognise a new movement distinct and dissimilar from regular hibernal habit. There float within sight (and the same is happening at a score of places beyond sight) not only the usual loose flotillas, but three, four, or five concrete assemblages of densely massed fowl whose appearance the slightest scrutiny will differentiate from the others. These are not sitting quiescent. The binoculars disclose a scene of perpetual motion, well-nigh of riot—one might be regarding a feathered faction-fight. Hundreds of units fight, splash, and chase, or throw up water with beating wings till surf and spray half conceals the seething crowd. That flicker of pinions and flying foam are, moreover, accompanied by a chorus of myriad notes—a babel of twirling sound blended in rising and falling cadences, comparable only to the distant roar of some mighty city. A more singular spectacle we have not encountered.

Inquiry from one's companion elicits the reply that these assemblages are *hechando corros para irse* (literally, "forming choruses preparatory to departure")—an expression which conveyed no more significance to us than it can to the reader.[1] We decided to return at daybreak to see this thing through, and after watching the phenomenon a score of times can now explain it.

During the morning hours there are established focal points whereat assemble those units already affected by the emigrant furor. These (at first, perhaps, but a score or two) rapidly increase in numbers till each focus becomes the nucleus of a *corro*. The seasonal infection spreads, and as its influence impregnates the surrounding masses, these, singly or in scores or hundreds as the passion seizes them, hasten to join one or other of the mobilising army-corps. Within an hour or two the insignificant original nucleus has developed into a vast host all in a ferment of agitation, and being constantly reinforced by buzzing swarms of recruits from without.

All this procedure, remember, has been taking place during the blazing noontide heat. Now the hour is 2 P.M., and the first gentle breath of the daily sea-breeze—the *viento de la mar*—is becoming perceptible. This breeze springs from the S.W., and

[1] The word "*Corro*" applies in Spanish to any noisy group—say a knot of people discussing politics in the street!

let us here admit that, being fowlers as well as naturalists, our observance of the phenomenon has usually been carried out upon a *lucio* which happens to terminate towards the N.E. in a long narrow bight fringed by tall reeds and bulrush, where, concealed in friendly covert, we can continue the observation while glancing along the barrel of a punt-gun. That secondary fact is merely incidental and, it so happens, facilitates the main object.

A mile to windward three such armies are mobilising separately within the scope of our view; and now the gentle force of that sea-breeze begins to impel those unconscious hosts, too preoccupied with all-absorbing passion to notice detail, directly towards the point whereat we lie concealed.

REED-BUNTING
A winter visitor to the marismas.

By this time the sun has three or four hours of declension and the thin dark line representing thousands of surging atoms has drifted down to within 200 yards. We can study at short range an amazing phenomenon. In weird exuberance they fight and flirt, chase, cherish, and flap till churned water flies in foam and a discordant roar of sibilant sound fills to the zenith the voids of space. The volume of voices defies description since these assembling multitudes belong to no single species, but include a promiscuous agglomeration of all that care to enlist, and each adds its own distinctive element to the general uproar.[1] Around the floating host new-comers buzz like swarming bees, each seeking some spot to wedge itself into the crowd.

To-night the main *corro* that we had been awaiting drifted past our front a trifle beyond effective range. The two that followed both "took the ground" and remained stationary, away to the right. The chance of making a great shot had failed; but we were content to watch the phenomenon to its finish.

Now the sun dips. The western sky is filled with golden glory; in twenty short minutes darkness will have enveloped

[1] One feels convinced, while lying listening, that these exuberant fowl invent and formulate a series of new notes and cries special to the occasion and outside their normal vocabulary. Hence, possibly, originated the use of the term "*Corro*."

the earth. Then in a moment, as by word of command, silence, sudden and impressive, reigns where just before that torrential babel had raged. Such, now, is the stilly silence that by comparison the pipe of a passing redshank sounds well-nigh scandalous! A few seconds pass. Then, dominated by a single impulse, the concentrated mass on our front rises simultaneously on wing. The spell of silence is broken; the roar of pinions reverberates far and wide. They're off—bound for Siberia!

> Yet unperplexed as though one spirit swayed
> Their indefatigable flight.

Holding the same massed formation, the fowl in three or four broadening circles quickly attain a considerable altitude—say 100 yards—and then head away on their course, *ALWAYS* (so far as they remain visible) to the *SOUTH-EAST*—diametrically opposite to the direction one would expect. As in deepening darkness we set forth on our homeward voyage, the heaven above pulsates at intervals with the beating of wings as yet more north-bound *corros* pass overhead.

Certain notable facts are observable in this vernal exodus. For upwards of twelve hours prior to departure the outgoing fowl take no food. That period is devoted exclusively to preparation and overhaul, *and* to pairing. Plumage is preened and dressed till each unit is spick and span, speckless, and not a feather misplaced. All, moreover, are absolutely empty—in best and lightest travelling trim.

When ducks are *acorrados*—that is, formed into *corros* (the term is used thus in verb-form)—their normal watchfulness is relaxed. All thought and energy are concentrated on the impending event. Hence, at these periods they are apt to fall an easier prey to the fowler and on wholesale lines. The native gunners with their trained *cabresto*-ponies sometimes unite and enormous totals are secured as the result of a single joint broadside. The fowl thus obtained afford proof of the facts just stated, being all absolutely empty; besides which many different species will be killed at the one shot.[1] These men also state that the ducks start already paired and flying side by side; this, they say, explains the ferment and commotion of the previous hours—

[1] *Corros* usually consist (especially the earlier assemblies) of one root-species—others merely "edge in." The later *corros*, however, are much mixed. They vary in numbers: one may contain but 200 pairs, another within half-a-mile as many thousands.

courting and sorting. Adult ducks, as previously indicated (p. 110), apparently pair for life; but since some species (such as wigeon) take at least two years to gain maturity, it is probable that the sexual phenomena which are so conspicuous in the *corros* represent the first pairing of the newly adult two-year-olds.

The most favourable time for the assembling of *corros* is on those days when great heat and calm at midday is succeeded towards evening by an extra strong sea-breeze. On such occasions very large numbers will leave between sundown and dark. Northerly winds will almost absolutely arrest the exodus.

For the season of 1900-1901 our game-books showed a total of 4849 wildfowl (4674 ducks and 175 geese)—a record for which we were good-humouredly taken to task by our venerable friend the late Canon Tristram, who thought it looked excessive. The figures certainly are big, but the next entry in the book reads:—

March 15.—This evening between fifty and seventy *corros* left within half an hour—say 50,000 to 70,000 ducks. Next morning the marisma appeared as full as ever.

Our toll of 5000 seemed by comparison but as a drop in the bucket!

CHAPTER XXXIX

SPRING-TIME IN THE MARISMAS

BIRD-LIFE IN A DRY SEASON

Bird-life in the Spanish marisma—in spring no less than in winter—presents spectacles of such abounding variety as can nowhere in Europe be surpassed. In the Arctic are vaster aggregations, but these, comprising, say, only half-a-dozen species, are less attractive. It is the infinite kaleidoscopic succession of graceful and dissimilar forms that hour by hour flash on one's sight—in a word, it is variety that lends abiding charm to our Spanish bird-world.

GREY PLOVER (May)

These scenes have already been described—we have ourselves described them in detail, and do not propose to recapitulate, alluring though the subject be.

Here we purpose depicting bird-life under undescribed conditions—in a spring when, by reason of exceptional drought, the myriad marsh-dwellers find themselves entirely at fault. Winging their seasonal way from Africa, to seek the seclusion of reed-girt pools and their accustomed league-long swamps and shallows, they found instead a calcined plain, no drop of water remaining, plant-life either prematurely parched or pulverised beneath a fiery sun. Watching the arrival of the advance-guard in early spring, one wondered what the bewildered hosts would do next, how they would face this fresh freak of nature.

The marismas, it should be explained, normally dry every summer, however wet the previous winter may have been.

Though the great *lucios* stood five feet deep in February, yet the deepest will be stone-dry by midsummer or, at latest, by St. Jago (July 24). Cattle and the wild-game can then only drink at the narrowed pools where permanent water, however exiguous, oozes forth—or the cattle from wells. In normal years, however, the marsh-birds have already reared their broods before these dates.

But in years of drought—what resource have they, where can they find a substitute for their sun-destroyed and desolate *incunabula*? Many (the waders in particular) instinctively prognosticate a drought; few, comparatively, either come or remain—those that come pass on. Even such birds as breed on permanent deep-water lakes (such, for example, as the smaller herons, egrets, and ibises) perceive in advance that, although they may have water assured, there will neither be sufficient covert, later on, to conceal their nurseries nor food for the rearing of their young. The erewhiles teeming heronries are abandoned.

Never within forty years has there occurred a drier season than this last, 1909-10. Incidentally we may remark that most of the previous spring-tides that we had expressly devoted to the marisma had been years of excessive rainfall, years when flamingoes nested abundantly—an unfailing index. Such was 1872, for example, 1879, and 1883; again, in April 1891, we remember our gunning-punt, caught in a squall, sinking beneath us in quite three feet of water though barely a mile from shore. These are the seasons when (as described in *Wild Spain*) one sees the waterfowl in their fullest abundance. On the present occasion (1910) we were to witness converse conditions. Throughout the preceding winter the fountains of heaven had been stayed, nor did the advent of spring bring one hour of rain. By mid-March the marisma was practically waterless—a fortnight later, sunbaked hard as bricks. Where now were the marsh-birds? In April or May you could ride a long day over arid mud-flats and never see a wing, bar, in the latter month, a few Kentish plovers and fluttering pratincoles[1]—add a band or two of croaking sand-grouse (*Pterocles alchata*) passing in the high heavens. Where had the exiled myriads gone? No man can answer.

[1] Pratincoles cast themselves down flat on the dry mud, fluttering as though in mortal agony—or, say, like a huge butterfly with a pin through its thorax! The device is presumably adopted in order to decoy an intruder away from their eggs or young. This year, however, the pratincoles still practised it, although they had neither eggs nor young at all. One day (May 12) a gale of wind blew some of the deceivers bodily away.

We are not so foolish as attempt to say; but we do venture to express the opinion that in years when even wildest Spain refuses asylum to wild creatures such as these, the result to them can only represent an overwhelming catastrophe. For there lies before them no alternative refuge; their races must perish by wholesale.

At those rare points where permanent waters remained one might look for great concentrations of bird-life, yet such was not the case. As indicated, the bulk had foreseen the event and abandoned this country.

One phenomenon struck us as inexplicable. Of the birds that did remain none displayed the slightest symptom of yielding to the vernal impulse, of pairing, or of desiring to nest.

Flamingoes, for example (what few there were), continued massed in solid herds up to mid-May. A band of 300 that we examined closely on the 12th at the Caño de la Junquera (though fully 90 per cent were adults in perfect pink feather) contained not a single paired couple. Hard by the flamingoes some forty or fifty spoonbills were feeding. These, last year, nested at this spot, building upon or among the low samphire-scrub—a dangerously open situation for such big and conspicuous birds. This spring, though many remained in the marisma, not a spoonbill nested in the district at all. Flamingoes, by the way, had exhibited extreme restlessness throughout the spring. On February 22, for example, while steaming up the Straits of Gibraltar, we detected them in quite incredible numbers but at an altitude almost beyond the range even of prism-glasses—it was a dim similitude to drifting *cirri* that first caught our eye. So vast was their aërial elevation that it was only after prolonged examination we at length recognised those revolving grey specks as being birds at all; presently a nearer band, directly overhead, revealed their characteristic identity. The bulk of these held a southerly tendency, towards Africa; others drifted undecided; while several bands, halting between two opinions, when lost to sight were wheeling beyond the Spanish hills.

Ducks also in mid-May serried the skies in utterly anachronous skeins—reminiscent of winter. These were largely marbled ducks, all unpaired; but there were also very large aggregations of mallards. One such pack on May 10 certainly counted 500—a number we never remember to have seen massed together in

Spain before, not even in winter. This was at the Hondon. A similar phenomenon was observed with the white-faced ducks. These curious creatures also remained in packs, and without sign of pairing, on the open waters of Santolalla—open only because aquatic plants had forborne to grow. In normal seasons these lakes are studded with great cane-brakes and islanded reed-jungles, within whose recesses these amphibians build their floating homes. This spring not a reed had grown partly owing to cattle having destroyed the earlier shoots which are usually protected by deep water. There was literally no covert within which these ducks (and the swarming coots and grebes) could breed, even were they so minded—which they were not!

The only ducks that had paired in earnest were gadwall, garganey, common and white-eyed pochard (of which the first three nest here in very limited numbers), together with normal quantities of mallard.

HEAD OF CRESTED COOT

The frontal plate is concave, whereas in the common coot it is convex.

A collateral result of the shortage of water wrought yet further havoc among the birds which had elected to remain, and accentuated the prescience of those that had departed. Nesting-places, ordinarily islanded in mid-water, were now left stranded on dry land and thus open to the ravages of the whole fraternity of four-footed egg-devouring vermin. Many species, we know, foresee such risks and invariably avoid them; others, less prudent, make the attempt and lose their labour. The white-eyed pochards, for example, which are accustomed to nest in islanded clumps of rush and dense aquatic grasses, this year simply provided free breakfasts to rats and ichneumons! We happened to require two or three settings of these ducks to hatch-off under hens, but no sooner did a marked nest contain three or four eggs than all were devoured! As to the coots, of which both the common and crested species breed in the marisma in myriads, they simply gave it up as a bad business. They did not depart, but resigned themselves to the necessity of skipping a season.

Gulls, great and small, with graceful marsh-terns, floated

spectre-like, surveying in solitude and silence arid wastes where before they had found aquatic Edens. Once or twice we also noticed the small white herons (buff-backed and egret) flying disconsolately over their lost homes. A similar remark would apply to most of the other marsh-breeders — we need not recapitulate them all. Stilts, for example, and avocets remained perforce in single blessedness—the latter in noisy querulous bands, quite wild and showing no tendency to assume spring notes or habits. We *did* chance on a single avocet's nest, where, in other years, we have found hundreds. The same with the stilts—they also retained winter ways. Curiously on May 17—

AVOCETS FEEDING

Though long-legged, these are half-webfooted and swim freely.

the one wet day—two male stilts had a regular set-to over an irresponsive female; the only symptom of their love-making we noticed all that spring!

Here, in the very height of what ought to have been the breeding-season, we had all these birds (and many others), instead of hovering overhead and shrieking in one's ear, flying wild in great packs at 100 yards.

How came it to pass that the normal vernal impulse was neglected for a whole season, unfelt and unrecognised—what was the precise psychological reason? It reads ridiculous to assume that any feathered husband should deliberately remark: "Now, Angelina, don't you agree that it would be imprudent our

attempting to raise a family this drought-struck season!" Nor could the neglect arise from physical weakness, since the birds were strong and wild. Such specimens as we shot proved plump and well favoured, though the generative organs disclosed a hybernal obsolescence. One explanation—indeed a rough-and-ready diagnosis that seemed to cover the ground—was given by Vasquez. Now Vasquez is our Guarda of the marisma; he is not scientific, but has been in charge of the wilderness and its wildfowl these thirty years and, more than all, he is observant. This rough keeper perhaps understands the inner lives of wildfowl, with the causes that actuate their movements and habits, better than our best scientists, and Vasquez told us in February: "This year no birds will breed here; the conditions necessary to *calientár los ovários* [literally, to warm up the ovaries] are wanting." The subsequent course of events, corroborated by the evidence of dissection, proved the correctness of his forecast.

For a moment we return to the white-faced ducks—no European bird-form less known, or more extravagant. With heavy, swollen beaks, quite disproportionate in size and pale waxy-blue in colour, with white heads, black necks, and rich chestnut bodies, their tiny wings (as well as the sheeny silken plumage) recall those of grebes, but they have long stiff tails like cormorants, and are more tenacious of the water than either of those. To push them on wing is well-nigh impossible. They seek safety in the middle waters and there abide, ignoring threats. To-day, however (May 16), we needed specimens, and by hustling their company between three guns, two mounted keepers, and an old boat that leaked like a sieve we eventually forced them to fly and secured three. They flew entirely in packs (not pairs), rarely many feet above the surface, but with a speed little inferior to pochard or other diving-ducks. Dissection showed that in a female the ovaries had not begun to develop, there were no ripe ova, nor had the oviduct been used. The *testes* in both the males proved also that here these birds were not yet breeding, or thinking of doing so.

A week earlier, however, at another lake of quite different formation and different plant-growth (thirty miles away), we had found these singular waterfowl already nesting, and append a note of that day:—

Laguna de las Terajes, *May* 8.—A lonely lagoon hidden away in a saucer-shaped basin amidst sequestered downs; almost the entire extent (twenty acres) choked with dense cane-brakes and thick green reeds which stood six or eight feet above water. We had driven hither, nine miles, across sandy heaths and pine-wood; and while breakfasting on the shore our two canoes (carted here yesterday) were got afloat. Meanwhile, on a patch of open water we had observed several white-faced ducks swimming, deeply immersed, and with their long stiff tails cocked upright at intervals, together with some eared grebes; while marsh-harriers slowly quartered the brakes and the reed-beds rang with the harsh nasal notes of the great sedge-warbler. On pushing

WHITE-FACED DUCK (*Erismatura leucocephala*). See also p. 28.

out into the aquatic jungle ahead—no light labour with five feet of water encumbered with densely matted canes and the dead tangle of former growths—we soon fell in with nests of all the species above mentioned and several more. Those of the white-faced ducks consisted, first, of a big floating platform of broken canes, upon which was piled a mass of fine dried "duck-weed"—the coots' nests being formed of flags and reeds alone. None of the ducks' nests contained eggs; probably the season was too early (in other years we have found their great white eggs, rough-grained, about the third week in May), but possibly the harriers had forestalled us, as we found one egg floating alongside. The grebes were just beginning to lay; their nests, composed of rotten floatage, all awash and malodorous, containing one to three eggs. Next we found two nests of marsh-harriers, immense masses of dead flags, two feet high, supported on floating

canes and lined with sticks, heather-stalks, and palmetto. One had four eggs, hard-sat; the other, two eggs, chipping, and two small young in white down, with savage black eyes. The harriers' eggs are usually dull white; in one nest found this year, however, the eggs were spotted with pale red—apparently blood-stains. Hard by were two nests of the purple water-hen, both of which had obviously been recently robbed by the harriers next door.

These curious birds climb the tall green reeds parrot-wise, grasping four or five at once in their long, supple, heavily clawed toes; then with their powerful red beaks neatly cut down the reeds a yard or more above water, in order to feed on the tender pith. Here and there float masses of these cut-down reeds, split and emptied—*comederos*, the natives call such spots. But the birds are silly enough to cut down the very reeds that surround their nests—thus exposing the huge piled-up structures to the gaze of their truculent neighbour, the egg-loving marsh-harrier. Instinct badly at fault here.

With a degree more intelligence, the purple water-hens might at least retaliate, by watching their opportunity and mopping-up the harriers' young. They are amply equipped for such work, having great pincer-like beaks fit to cut barbed wire!

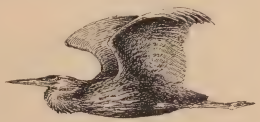
On the other hand, the great purple water-hens habitually do a bit robbery and murder on their own account, plundering the nests both of ducks and coots and devouring eggs or young alike. We shot one whose beak was smeared all over with yolk from a plundered duck's nest hard by, and alongside the nest of a *Porphyrio* with five eggs (found May 1) lay floating the headless corpses of two young coots. We have also observed similar phenomena alongside the nests of the coots themselves—doubtless attributable to the same cause. The eggs of the purple water-hen are lovely objects, ruddier and much more richly coloured than those of any of its congeners. These birds remain in the marismas all winter.

In the densest brake bred purple herons, but this part proved quite impenetrable to canoes. A few days later, however, at the Retuerta, we reached a little colony of three nests. A beautiful sight they presented, broad platforms of criss-crossed canes, cleverly supported on tall bamboos, and lined with the flowering tops of *carrizos* (canes). These three nests were close together

(another or two hard by), were about five feet above water-level, and contained three, three, and four pale-blue eggs. While circling around their nests, the old herons showed a conspicuous projection beneath their curved necks. We therefore shot one and found the effect was caused by a curious "kink" or bony process on the front of the upper neck—as sketched.

Of other birds observed at this Laguna de Terajes may be noted a few mallard and marbled ducks, a pair of squacco herons (not breeding), common sandpipers (on May 8), and a party of whiskered terns which arrived while we were there.

The day we had spent among the marsh-birds at this sequestered lagoon happened to be the day of the general election and the usual excitement prevailed. Yet, as we journeyed down by the early train, we had read in the morning's paper this paragraph: "An understanding" [*Inteligencia*] — "Yesterday an understanding was arrived at in Madrid between Maura and Cañalejas, by which the former is to hold 225 seats." Why, after that, bother further with an election? 'Twill serve as an object-lesson at home.



PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea*)

Another phenomenon of the Spanish marismas is the through-transit in May of that little group of world-wanderers that make a winter-home in the southern hemisphere—in South Africa and Madagascar, Australia, New Zealand, some even in Patagonia—and yet return each spring to summer in Arctic regions. These comprise, notably, but four species, and not one of these four, in our view, is excelled for perfect beauty of bright, chaste, and contrasted coloration by any other bird-form on earth. This quartette is composed of the grey plover, knot, curlew-sandpiper, and bartailed godwit—all four of which appear here in thousands every May, and all in summer dress.

Note, first, that these do not arrive in Spain (having come 6000 or 8000 miles but being still 2000 or 3000 miles short of their final destination) until long after all other birds—including several congeneric and closely related species—have already laid their eggs and many hatched their young. Also, secondly, that some of them begin to assume their spring breeding-plumage

under autumnal conditions *before* quitting Australia in April—that is, the Australian autumn—and while yet some 10,000 miles distant from the points at which that breeding-dress is designed to be worn.

To the four named might properly be added other two species—the sanderling and the little stint. Our only reason for confining our remarks to the original quartette is that, in Spain, the transit of the other two is less pronounced and noticeable.

Last spring (1910), dry as the marismas were, we had these globe-spanners in thousands. They were extremely wild, and

GREY PLOVERS

In summer plumage, on route for Siberia—Marisma, May 12.

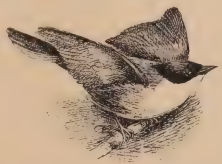
it was only by elaborate "drives" that we secured a few specimens.[1] We also observed in mid-May hundreds of *black*-tailed godwits, a species which usually disappears from southern Spain at end of March and which we have found nesting in Jutland *before* the above date, viz. the first week in May.

Whimbrels had been extremely abundant early in May, together with a few greenshanks, ring-dotterel, and green sandpiper. On May 13 we observed several of the Mediterranean black-headed gull (*Larus melanocephalus*) on Santolalla.

[1] In none were the generative organs more than slightly developed, and in most the plumage was full of new blood-feathers, showing that the summer change was not yet complete. The date, May 10-15. Another drawing is given at p. 42.

[NOTE.—Referring to the last sentence, our companion, Commander H. Lynes, R. N., writes :—" All the gulls I saw on Santolalla I am positive were *L. ridibundus*, and I looked most carefully. The wing-pattern of *melanocephalus* is very distinct. With the latter I became quite familiar in the Mediterranean in winter, and also saw them in late summer at Smyrna." We, nevertheless, leave our own record as above, being confident that such gulls as happened to come within our own view were *exclusively* of the southern species, with its darker and deeper hood. But the occurrence of our British Black-headed Gull so far south in mid-May is also remarkable. That species, though abundant all winter, has disappeared, as a rule, by the end of March. Our own last note of observing it during the spring in question was on April 1. We may add a further note of having observed *both* species (swimming alongside) on Guadalquivir, March 12, 1909. The distinction, alike in the depth and darker shade of the " hood " in *L. melanocephalus*, was unmistakable, even to naked eye.]

This dry spring not a spoonbill nested in Andalucia. The teeming *pajaréras*, or heronries, at the Rocina de la Madre and in Doñana were left lifeless and abandoned. In normal years these are tenanted (as shown in photo at p. 32) by countless multitudes of buff-backed, squacco, and night-herons, glossy ibis, some purple herons, and a few pairs of spoonbills, whose massed nests fairly weigh down the marsh-girt tamarisks.



ORPHEAN WARBLER (*Sylvia orphea*)

Arrives end of April ; hardly so brilliant a songster as its specific title would import.

CHAPTER XL

SKETCHES OF SPANISH BIRD-LIFE

Spain is a land where one can enjoy seeing in their everyday life those "rare" British birds that at home can only be seen in books or museums. So far as it can be done in half-a-dozen brief sketches, we will endeavour to illustrate this.

I. An Evening's Stroll from Jerez

Spanish towns and villages are self-contained like the "fenced cities" of Biblical days. The *pueblecitos* of the sierra show up as a concrete splash of white on the brown hillside. Once outside the gates you are in the *campo* = the country. Even Jerez with its 60,000 inhabitants boasts no suburban zone. Within half an hour's walk one may witness scenes in wild bird-life for the like of which home-staying naturalists sigh in vain. We are at our "home-marsh," a mile or two away: it is mid-February. Within fifteen yards a dozen stilts stalk in the shallows; hard by is a group of godwits, some probing the ooze, the rest preening in eccentric outstretched poses. Beyond, the drier shore is adorned by snow-white egrets (*Ardea bubulcus*), some perched on our cattle, relieving their tick-tormented hides.

Thus, within less than fifty yards, we have in view three of the rarest and most exquisite of British birds. And the list can be prolonged. A marsh-harrier in menacing flight, his broad wings brushing the bulrushes, sweeps across the bog, startling a mallard and snipes; there are storks and whimbrels in sight (the latter possibly slender-billed curlew), and a pack of lesser bustard crouch within 500 yards in the palmettos. From a marsh-drain springs a green sandpiper; and as we take our homeward way, serenaded by bull-frogs and mole-crickets, there resounds over-head the clarion-note of cranes cleaving their way due north.

II. An Isolated Crag in Andalucia

Within an easy half-day's ride from X. lie the cliffs of Chipipi, rising in crenellated tiers from the winding river at their base. It is a lovely May morning. Doves in dozens dash away as we ride through groves of white poplars, and the soft air is filled with their murmurous chorus; the bush-clad banks are vocal with the song of orioles and nightingales, cuckoos, and a score of warblers—Cetti's and orphean, Sardinian, polyglotta, Bonelli's. The handsome rufous warbler, though not much of a songster, is everywhere conspicuous, flirting a boldly-barred, fan-shaped tail that catches one's eye. There are woodchats, serins, hoopoes; azure-blue rollers squawk, and brilliant bee-eaters poise and chatter overhead—their nest-burrows perforate the river-bank like a sand-martins' colony. On willow-clad eyots nest lesser ring-dotterels and otters bask; while in the shaded depths beneath the fringing osiers lurk barbel intent to dash at belated grasshopper or cricket.

SAVI'S WARBLER (*Sylvia savii*)

A spring-migrant, common but very local. Has eggs by mid-April.

In a thick lentiscus is the nest of a great grey shrike, and while we watch, its owner flies up carrying a lizard in her beak. Half an hour later we see a second shrike, with falcon-like dash, capture another lizard basking in a sunny cranny among the rocks—no mean performance that. There are snakes here also; one we killed, a coluber, on March 31, was 5½ feet long and contained two rabbits swallowed whole and head first—one partly digested. Another snake, quite small, struck us as being something new; him we bottled in spirit and despatched to the British Museum. Presently came the reply, thanking us for a "Lizard, *Blanus cinereus*." Lizard? Well, we learnt a lesson. There are limbless lizards, and this was one—the subterranean amphis-

baena; our British blindworm (*Anguis fragilis*) is another, and that also we did not know before. There are curious reptiles here in Spain—the chameleon, for example. The lobe-footed gecko, *Salamanquésa* in Spanish, haunts sunny rocks where insects abound. But he carries war into the enemy's camp, invading (not singly, but in force) the wild-bees' nests. A Spanish bee-keeper gravely assured us that the cold-blooded gecko does this thing expressly to enjoy the sensation of being stung in twenty places at once! Here in a shady glade lie strewn broadcast the wings of butterflies—examine *very* closely the bush above, and presently an iris-less eye, expressionless as a grey pearl, will meet your own. That is a praying mantis (or *Santa Teresa* in Spanish), a practical insect but no aesthete, since he devours the ugly body and casts aside the beauteous wings!—see his portrait at p. 87. Among butterflies we counted here the scarce swallowtail, *Thaïs polyxena* (hatching out on April 3), *Vanessa polychloros*, a big fritillary with blood-red under-surface to its fore-wings (*Argynnis maia*, Cramer), *Euchloëbelia* (March) and the curious insect figured alongside, we know not what it is.[1]

For more than thirty years within our knowledge (and probably for centuries before) these cliffs have formed a home of Bonelli's eagle. Two huge stick-built nests stand out in visible projection from crevices in the crag, some forty yards apart. To-day (April 3) the occupied eyrie contained a down-clad eaglet, four partridges, and half a rabbit, besides a partridge's egg, intact, and sundry scraps of flesh, all quite fresh. The nest was lined with green olive-twigs; swarms of carrion-flies buzzed around, and a great tortoiseshell butterfly alit on its edge while we were yet inside. The parent eagles soared overhead, the female carrying a half rabbit, which, in her impatience, she presently commenced to devour, the pair perching on a dead ilex, and affording us this

[1] Common British birds we exclude from notice, or might fill a page with swarming gold-finches, robins, wrens, chaffinch, blackbird, stonechat, whitethroats, tree-pipits, titlarks (the last three on passage), blackcap, garden-warbler, whinchat, redstart, and a host more.

sketch and another inserted at p. 26. Her white breast shone in the sun with a satin-like sheen.

Within sight (though fifteen miles away) is another eyrie of this species—the alternative nests not ten feet apart, merely a projecting buttress of rock separating the two vertical fissures in which they rest. This site is in a rock-stack standing out from the wooded slope of the sierra. The two eggs, slightly blotched with red, were laid in February.

The rough bush-clad hills above our cliff are preserved, and presently meeting the game-keeper, we tried—(that daily toll of four partridges plus sundry rabbits had got on our consciences!)—to put in a word for our eagle-friends, assuring him they did him service by destroying snakes and big lizards (which they don't). "Si, señor," he agreed, adding, "y los insectos!"

BONELLI'S EAGLES SOARING AROUND EYRIE

Note white patch in centre of back, between the wings.

Farther along the cliff we found two nests of neophron, each containing two very handsome eggs. This bird makes a comfortable home, the foundation being of sticks, but with a warmly lined central saucer, bedecked with old bones, snakes' vertebrae, rabbit-skulls, and similar ornaments. The nests were on overhung shelves of the vertical crag, and (like those of the eagles) only accessible by rope. There lay a rat in one—and rather "high."

Remaining denizens of these crags we can but briefly name. A pair of eagle-owls had three young (fully fledged by June 10) in a deep rock-fissure; there were also ravens, many lesser kestrels, and a colony of genets.

III. Oak-Wood and Scrub

Cistus and tree-heath, genista and purple heather that brushes your shoulder as you ride, studded with groves of

cork-oak—such was our hunting-field. The reader's patience shall not be abused by a catalogue of ornithological fact. True, we were studying bird-problems, and at the moment the writer was endeavouring, amidst ten-foot scrub, to locate by its song, a nest of Polyglotta—or was it *Bonellii*?—when in the depths of osmunda fern was descried something *hairy*—it was a wild-boar! . . . Three horsemen armed with *garrochas* come galloping through the bush—herdsmen rounding-up cattle? But this morning it is a *bull* they are rounding-up; and a bull that had grown so savage and intractable that his life was forfeit. A crash in the brushwood and we stand face to face. Three minutes later that bull fell dead with two balls in his body; but two others, less well aimed, had whistled past our ears. Those three minutes had been momentous—the choice, it had seemed, lay between horn and bullet. Bird-nesting in Spanish wilds has its serious side.

The afternoon was less eventful. Almost each islanded grove had yielded spoil. We need not specify spectacled, subalpine, and orphean warblers, woodpeckers, woodchats and grey shrikes, nightjars, owls, kestrels, and kites—some prizes demanding patient watching, others a strenuous climb. The last hour had resulted in discovering a nest of booted eagle, two of black, and one of red kites, each with two eggs (the next tree held a nest of the latter containing a youngster near full grown). We had turned to ride homewards when, over a centenarian cork-oak on the horizon, we recognised (by their buoyant flight and white undersides) a pair of serpent-eagles. The grotesque old tree was half overthrown, and on its topmost limb was established the snake-eaters' eyrie, containing the usual single big white egg—this specimen, however, distinctly splashed with reddish brown. In the same tree were also breeding cushats and doves, a woodpecker with four eggs, and a swarm of bees who made things lively for the climber. One of to-day's climbs, by the way, had resulted incidentally in the capture of a family of dormice, *Lirones avellanos* in Spanish, handsome creatures with immense whiskers and arrayed in contrasts of rich brown, black and white.

Half an hour later we descried the unmistakable eyrie of an imperial eagle—a platform of sticks that crowned the summit of a huge cork-oak, the more conspicuous since any projecting twigs that might interrupt the view are always broken off. The eagle,

entirely black with white shoulders, only soared aloft when L. was already half-way up. The two handsome eggs we left, though they have since, presumably, added two more "detrimentals" to prey on our partridges. Eagles, so soon as adult, pair for life; but that condition may require several years for full attainment, and in the imperial eagle the adolescent period is passed in a distinctive uniform of rich chestnut. So long ago as 1883, however, we discovered the singular fact that this species breeds while yet (apparently) "immature." That is, we have frequently found one of a nesting pair in the paler plumage described, while its mate gloried in the rich sable-black of maturity, as sketched on p. 31. This year (1910) we had come across such a couple—they had two eggs on March 15—the male being black, while his partner was parti-coloured. A curious incident had occurred at that nest; at dawn next morning a griffon vulture was discovered asleep close alongside the sitting eagle. But on the arrival of the husband a furious scene ensued! The intruder (whom we acquit of dishonourable intent) was set upon, hustled, and violently ejected from the tree—hurriedly and dishevelled he departed. But conjugal peace was soon restored, and presently the royal pair set out in company for a morning's hunting.

These resident birds-of-prey breed early. We have found the eagles' eggs by February 28, buzzards' on March 12, and red kites' on March 14.

This spring was remarkable for the numbers of hobbies that passed north during May, sometimes in regular flocks. They often roosted in old kites' nests, and when disturbed therefrom misled us into a futile climb.

White-tailed or Sea-Eagle (*Haliaëtos albicilla*).—This does not properly belong to the Spanish zone. We cannot find recorded a single authentic instance of its occurrence in that country, but can supply one ourselves.

In the early days of February 1898 we watched on several occasions an eagle (which at the time we took to be Bonelli's) wildly chasing the geese that are wont to assemble in front of our shooting-lodge. Splendid spectacles these acrial hunts afforded. The selected goose, skilfully separated from his company, made a grand defence. Fast he flew and far, now low

on water, now soaring upwards in widening circle; but all the time gaggling and protesting against the outrage in strident tones that we could hear a mile away. Never, so far as eyesight could reach, did the assailant make good his hold.

Months afterwards—it was before daybreak on December 28 (1898)—the authors lay awaiting the "early flight" of geese at the Puntal, hard by, when an eagle (whether the same or not) appeared from out the gloom, made a feint at No. 1's decoy-geese (made of wood), passed on and fairly "stooped" at those of No. 2. A moment later the great bird-of-prey fell with resounding splash, and proved to be (so far as we know) the only sea-eagle ever shot in Spain—a female, weight 12½ lbs., expanse just under 8 feet.

This is not the only instance in our experience of eagles hunting before the dawn. We recall several others. Apparently, if pressed by hunger, eagles start business early—almost as early as we do ourselves.

Spotted Eagle (*Aquila naevia*).—This also, like the last, is scarcely a Spanish species; but a beautiful example, heavily spotted, was shot in September in the Pinar de San Fernando by our friend Mr. Osborne of Puerto Sta. Maria. It was one of a pair.

Peregrine and Partridge.—Corral Quemado, *Jan.* 27, 1909. While posted on a mesembrianthemum-clad knoll during a big-game drive, troops of partridges kept streaming out from the covert behind. Their demeanour struck both me and the next gun posted on a knoll 200 yards away. Across the intervening glade, almost bare sand but for a stray tuft of rush or marram-grass, the partridge ran to and fro in a dazed sort of way, crouching flat as though terror-stricken, or standing upright, gazing stupidly in turn. None dared to fly, though some were so near they could not have failed to detect me. The mystery was solved when a peregrine swept close overhead and made feint after feint: yet not a partridge would rise. Well they knew that the falcon would not strike *on the ground*; but what a "soft job" it would have been for a goshawk or marsh-harrier! Presumably partridge discriminate between their winged enemies and in each case adapt defence to fit attack.

An interesting scene was terminated by a lynx trotting out by

my neighbour, Sir Maurice de Bunsen, who might thus have been taken unawares; only ambassadors are never believed to be so, and on this occasion the spotted diplomat certainly got the ball quite right, behind the shoulder.

Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*).—Over dark wastes resound "duck-guns sullenly booming." Thereat from reed-bed and cane-brake awaken roosting harriers, quick to realise the import. It is long before their normal "hours of business," but these miss no chances, and soon the hidden gunner descries spectral forms drifting in the gloom—all intent to share his spoils. Watch the robbers' methods. In the deep a winged teal is making away, almost awash. The raptor feints again and again, following the cripple's subaquatic course; but he never attempts to strike till incessant diving has worn the victim out. Then—so soon as the luckless teal is compelled to tarry five seconds above water—instantly those terrible talons close like a rat-trap. Next comes a lively wigeon, merely wing-tipped; but the water here is shoal and the hawk dare not close. For the volume of mud and spray thrown up by those whirling pinions would drench his own plumage. The wigeon realises his advantage and sticks to the shallow—the raptor ever trying to force him to the deep. The end comes all the same, though the process of tiring-out occupies longer—sooner or later, down drop the yellow legs—there is a moment of strenuous struggle and the duck is lifted and borne ashore. Should no land be near, the branches of a submerged samphire will serve for a dining-table. Within five minutes nought is left but empty skin and clean-picked bones.

Obviously any attempt to seek dead at a distance or to recover cripples is labour lost—once they drift, or swim, or dive, to the danger-radius instantly the chattel passes to the rival "sphere of influence."

As early as February (and sometimes even in January) the abounding coots begin to lay. The marsh-harrier notes the date and becomes a determined oologist. Over the everlasting samphire-swamp resounds the reverberating cry of the crested coot, *Hoo, hoo, Hoo, hoo*, so strikingly human that one looks round to see who is signalling. Presently you hear the same cry, but wailing in different tone and temper. That is a coot defending hearth and home against the despoiler; and bravely is that defence maintained. With a glass, one sees the coot throw

herself on her back and hold the hawk at bay, striking out right and left, for she has powerful claws and can scratch like a cat. Often the assailant is fairly beaten off; or should the fight end without visible issue, probably the coveted eggs have been hustled overboard in the tussle. Then it amuses to watch the harrier's frantic efforts to recover the sunken prizes from the shallows.

Great Spotted Cuckoo (*Oxylophus glandarius*).—A striking rakish form, this stranger from unknown Africa silently appears in Spain during the closing days of February or early in March. On the fifth evening of the latter month, while rambling in the bush on the watch for "some new thing," a hawk-like figure swept by and perched on the outer branches of a thorny acacia. When shot, the bird dropped a yard or so, then clutching a bough with prehensile zygodactylic claws, hung suspended with so desperate a hold that it was with difficulty released. Waiting a few minutes, a harsh resonant scream—*cheer-oh*, thrice repeated—announced the arrival of the male, which fell winged on a patch of bog beyond. Ere we could reach the spot the bird had run back, regained the outer trees, and was climbing a willow-trunk more in the style of parrot than cuckoo. The beak was used for steadying, and so fast did it climb that we had to ascend after it.

The beak in this species opens far back, giving a very wide gape—colour inside pink, deepening to dark carmine. We sketched and preserved both specimens, see p. 41 and above.

As a rule this cuckoo disappears in early autumn, but we have an exceptional record of its occurrence in winter. One was shot at San Lucar de Barraméda, December 19, 1909.

This cuckoo, like all its old-world congeners,[1] is parasitic in its domestic *ménage*—that is, it adopts a system of reproduction by proxy—relying, as Canon Tristram long ago put it, on finding a "foundling hospital" for its young. But even the keen intellect

[1] The African bush-cuckoos, or coucals (*Centropus*), certainly build their own nests; but they are only related nominally, and the connection is remote.

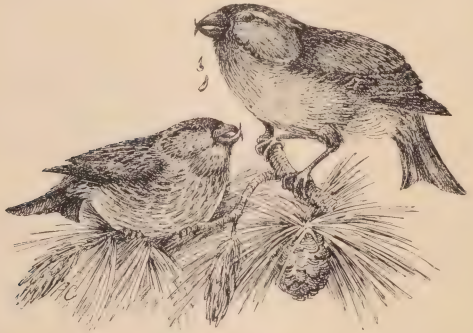
quoted was at first at fault. For the great spotted cuckoo differs in one essential point from that "wandering voice" with which we are familiar at home. The latter deposits a single egg in casual nest of titlark, hedge-sparrow, wagtail—in short, of any small bird, regardless of the fact that its own egg may differ conspicuously from those of its selected foster-parent. The spotted cuckoo is more circumspect. Everywhere it restricts the delegated duty to some member of the *Corvidae*,[1] and in Spain exclusively to the magpies. Moreover, whether by accident or evolution, the cuckoo has so admirably adapted the coloration of its own egg to resemble that of its victim, as to deceive even so cute a bird as the magpie. Earlier ornithologists (as above suggested) failed for a moment to distinguish the difference—it was, in fact, the zygodactylic foot of an unhatched embryo that first betrayed the secret (Tristram, *Ibis*, 1859). On close examination the cuckoo's eggs differ in their more elliptic form and granular surface; but, unless previously forewarned and specially alert, no one would suspect that these were not magpies' eggs, any more than does the magpie itself.

The spotted cuckoo deposits two, three, and even four eggs in the *same* magpie's nest, sometimes leaving the lawful owner's eggs undisturbed, in other cases removing all or part of them—we have noticed spilt yoke at the entrance. It would appear difficult, in these domed nests, for the young cuckoos to eject their pseudo-brothers and sisters; but this detail of their life-history remains, as yet, unsolved.

Crossbills.—Nature delights in presenting phenomena which no tangible cause appears to warrant. Such were the thrice-repeated invasions of Europe by "Tartar hordes"—they were only sand-grouse—that occurred during the past century (in 1863, 1872, and 1888); and in 1909 an analogous problem, though on minor scale, was offered by crossbills. From north to extreme south of our Continent these small forest-dwellers precipitated themselves bodily westwards. This was in July. All the west-European countries, from Norway to Spain, recorded an unwonted irruption. In Andalucia (at Jerez) crossbills were first noticed about mid-July, and their appearance so impressed country-folk little accustomed to discriminate small birds, as to suggest to them the idea that the strangers must

[1] In Egypt the hooded crow (*Corvus cornix*) is invariably the cuckoo's dupe; in Algeria, *Pica mauretanica*.

have fled from Morocco to avoid the fighting then raging around Melilla! But in Spain a further and anomalous complexity followed. For the Spanish specimens we sent home, on being submitted to Dr. Ernst Hartert, proved to belong to a purely Spanish subspecies—a race distinguishable by its weaker mandibles and other minor variations. Hence the movement in Spain had been purely internal, and it became difficult to suppose that (although simultaneous) it could have been predisposed and



CROSSBILLS, ADULT AND YOUNG (*Loxia curvirostra*)

JEREZ, July 1910.

actuated by precisely the same motives as those which compelled a more extensive exodus farther north. Thus results the curious issue—that presumably different causes, operating over a wide geographical area, produced similar and simultaneous effects. These immigrant crossbills disappeared from Andalucia at the end of August.

Crossbills we used to observe in winter in our pine-forests of Doñana; but owing to local causes they have now missed several years. Their migrations within Spain are rather on the vertical than the horizontal plane—that is, merely seasonal movements between the higher lands and the lower. In Spain, denuded of natural forest, the habitat of such birds is narrowly restricted.

Hence their sudden appearance in new areas (such as this, at forestless Jerez) is at once conspicuous.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*).—Birds, as a rule, are strict geographists. They recognise fixed range-boundaries and abide thereby. But exceptions occur, and an instance has been offered by the glossy ibis. This bird has always been a conspicuous member of the teeming *pajaréras*, or mixed heronries, of our wooded swamps of Andalucia. But it was only as a spring-migrant that the ibis was known. It arrived in April and departed, after nesting, in September. A diluvial winter in 1907-8, however, apparently induced it to reconsider its "standing orders." Already, that autumn, the ibises had departed—as usual. But in December (the whole country meanwhile having been inundated) they suddenly reappeared. Small parties distributed themselves over the marismas, and with them came an unwonted profusion of other waders, stilts and curlews, whimbrels and godwits, the latter a month or two before their usual date. All availed the occasion to frequent far-inland spots, normally dry bush and forest, *nota quae sedes fuerat columbis*, and one saw flights of waders and even ducks, such as teal and shoveler, circling over flooded forest-glades.

The changed quarters evidently met with approval, for each succeeding year since then we have had the company of ibises *during winter*.

An immature ibis, shot January 30, otherwise in normal plumage, had the head and neck brownish grey with curlew-like striations.

Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*).—Years ago we wrote in our wrath, moved thereto by the constant misuse of the term, that such a thing as a "rare bird" does not exist, save only in a relative sense. Go to its proper home, wherever that may be, and the supposed rarity is found abundant as its own utility and nature's balances permit. Should some lost wanderer straggle a few hundred miles thence, it is proclaimed a "rare bird."

Against this, our old mentor, Howard Saunders, wrote across the proof-sheet: "There ARE rare birds, some nearly extinct"; and the above species affords an admirable example of these exceptions to the general rule.

No one at present knows the true home of the slender-billed

curlew, nor the points (if any) where it is common, nor where it breeds. In southern Spain it appears every year during February and at no other season; while even then its visits are confined to a few days and to certain limited areas. The photo at p. 250 shows a beautiful pair shot February 5, 1898. When met with, they are rather conspicuous birds, distinguishable from whimbrel by their paler colour—indeed, on rising, the "slender-bills" look almost white. A specially favoured haunt in the Coto Doñana is the bare sandy flat in front of Martinazo.

When we first studied ornithology there still remained whole categories of birds (many of them abundant British species) whose breeding-places were utterly unknown.

One by one they have been removed from the list of "missing," forced to surrender their secrets by the resistless, world-scouring energy of ornithologists (mostly British). The year 1909 saw but ONE species yet undiscovered—our present friend, the slender-billed curlew.

While we are yet busy with this book, the eggs of the slender-billed curlew have been found—in Siberia!—the ultimate answer in all such cases. The first was exhibited by Mr. H. E. Dresser at the meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club on December 15, 1909, having been taken by Mr. P. A. Schastowskij on the shores of Lake Tschany, near Taganowskiye, in Siberia on the 20th of May preceding.

Yes, there *do* exist "rare birds," and in Europe the slender-billed curlew appears to be an excellent illustration of the fact.

SANTOLALLA, *December* 29, 1897.—A wild night, black as ink, and a whole gale blowing from the eastward; an hour's ride through the scrub, and five guns silently distribute themselves along the shores. Strategic necessity placed us to windward, so most fowl were bound to fall in the water. As stars pale to the dawn the flight begins, the dark skies hurtle with the rush of passing clouds, and for two hours a steady fusillade startles the solitude.

As ten o'clock approaches, one by one we seek the cork-oak, from beneath whose canopy a welcome column of smoke has long announced that breakfast was preparing. But considering the run of shooting we have heard, the toll of game brought in seems humiliating. Each gunner, gloomily depositing his fifteen or twenty, declares he has lost twice that number in the open water! . . . Well, a list of "claims" being drawn up, it appears

that 205 duck are stated to have been shot, while only 120 can be counted. In his inner conscience possibly each man regards the rest as . . . but, ere breakfast is over, here come the keepers. They have ridden round the lee-shores and islets, and bring in another 114!

The bag after all sums up to 234, or actually nineteen more than the sum-total of claims that we had been laughing at as extravagant. This is the list:—

2 geese	4 gadwall
8 mallard	2 shoveler
53 wigeon	3 pochard
152 teal	9 tufted duck

There were also shot two cormorants (mistaken for geese in the half-light), a marsh-harrier, two great crested grebes, and several coots.

The incident illustrates an instance of scrupulous honesty.

Other Countries, Other Standards

(a sentiment about wildfowl).

(*January* 1909.)

A wet winter and flooded marisma—under our eyes float wildfowl in league-long lengths; countless, but far out in open water. By experience we know them to be unassailable. Yet these hosts seem to throw down the gauntlet of defiance at our very doors; and under the reproach of that unspoken challenge experience succumbs. That night we arranged to dispose our six guns over a two-league triangle before the morrow's dawn. After every detail had been fixed, to us our trusted pessimist, Vasquez: "Ni por aquí ni por allí, ni por este lado ni por el otro, ni por ninguna parte cualquiera, no harémos *náda* por la mañana" —"Neither on this side nor on that, neither to east nor west, nor at any other point whatever, shall we do the slightest good to-morrow!"

On reassembling for breakfast, the result worked out as follows: 2 geese, 3 mallard, 29 wigeon, 26 teal, 7 gadwall, 4 shovelers, 1 marbled and 1 tufted duck. Total, 73 head before ten o'clock, besides a curlew and several golden plover, godwits and sundries.

We felt fairly satisfied; yet Vasquez's comment ran: "Seventy head among six guns, *eso no es nada* = that is nothing!"

NOTE.—The writer had in his pocket a letter from home: "We put in six days' punt-gunning at the New Year. Frost severe and all conditions favourable. My bag, 4 brent-geese, 2 mallard, 3 wigeon, and a northern diver.—E. H. C."

Appendix

A Specific Note on the Wild-Geese of Spain

The Greylag Goose (*Anser cinereus*) is the only species we need here consider. For of the many hundreds of wild-geese that we have shot and examined during the eighteen years since the publication of *Wild Spain*, every one has proved to be a Greylag. This is the more remarkable inasmuch as an allied form, the Bean-Goose, was supposed in earlier days to occur in Spain, though relatively in small numbers. Col. Irby estimated the Bean-Geese as one to 200 of the Greylags; but no such proportion any longer exists, at least in the delta of the Guadalquivir, where, during eighteen years, hardly a single Bean-Goose has been obtained.[1]

This abandonment of southern Spain by the Bean-Goose (presuming it was ever found therein) appears inexplicable. The species has lately been recognised as divisible into various races or subspecies (differing chiefly in the form and colour of the beak),[2] for which reason it may here be recorded that of the few Bean-Geese examined twenty years ago in Spain, the beak was invariably dark to below the nasal orifice, with a dark tip, and an intermediate band of rufous-chestnut.

Of the other three members of the genus, the Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) has never occurred in Spain; while neither the white-fronted nor the lesser white-fronted species (*A. albifrons* and *A. erythropus*, L.) have ever been recorded save in an isolated instance in either case. We have never met with any one of them—indeed, the only wild-goose in our records, other than Greylag and half-a-dozen Bean-Geese, is a single Bernacle (*Bernicla leucopsis*), one of three that was shot at Santolalla by our late friend Mr. William Garvey.

Of the Greylags that winter in Andalucia, the great majority are adults—that is (presuming our diagnosis to be correct), scarcely one in four is a gosling of the year. The adult geese we distinguish by the spur on the wing-point of the ganders and generally by their larger size and heavier build. Their undersides, moreover, are more or less spotted or barred with black—some wear regular "barred waistcoats," whereas the young birds are wholly plain white beneath. The legs and feet of the latter are also of the palest flesh-colour (some almost white), rarely showing any approximation to a pink shade, and their beaks vary from nearly white to palest yellow; whereas in the older, mostly "spot-breasted," geese the beak is deep yellow to orange, and their legs and feet are distinctly pink—some as pronouncedly so as in *A. brachy-*

[1] We find a note that one Bean-Goose was shot on November 27, 1896—weight 5¼ lbs.

[2] See the elaborate monograph on *The Geese of Europe and Asia*, by M. Serge Alphéraky of St. Petersburg (London, Rowland Ward).

rhynchus. These "soft parts" are, however, subject to infinite variation, and the above definition is a careful deduction from the results of many years' observation.[1]

On several occasions we have examined from a dozen to a score of geese without finding a single *gosling* among them. The largest proportion of the latter so recorded was on January 29, 1907, when of sixteen geese shot, five (or possibly six) were young birds of the year before. All these sixteen showed some white feathers on the forehead, and the heaviest pair (two old ganders) weighed together 18½ lbs.

As regards their weights, the following notes show the variation :—

During the severe drought of 1896, six geese weighed on November 26, when almost starving for food and water, ranged from 6¼ to 7¾ lbs. A month later, when rains had fallen, weights had increased to 8¼ to 9¼ lbs.

December 28, 1899.—The heaviest of 29 scaled 9¼ lbs.

January 30, 1905.—The geese this dry season are in fine condition. An old gander, shot at Martinazo, exceeded 10½ lbs., another pair, shot right and left, scaled 9½ and 10 lbs.

February 4, 1907.—Two geese, the heaviest of eleven shot this morning, weighed over 9 lbs. each, the pair scaling 18¼ lbs. It was a severe frost, the shallows being covered with ice, and as each goose fell, two bits of solid ice, in form as it were a pair of sandals, were found lying alongside it, these having been detached by the fall from the feet of the bird.

1906. *November* 28.—Two pure white geese observed on Santolalla to-day and on subsequent occasions. Though usually seen flying in company with packs of normally coloured geese, the white pair always kept together.

1907. *January* 25.—After a month's bitterly cold and dry weather with few geese, the wind to-day shifted to east, with heavy rain. All day long a continuous entry of geese took place from the south-westward, in frequent successive packs—sometimes two or three lots in sight at once. A sense of movement was perceptible over the whole marisma. Next morning these newcomers were sitting in ranks of thousands by the "new water" all along the verge of the marisma—a wondrous sight.

Notes on some Wildfowl that nest in Southern Spain

WILD-DUCKS

Pintail (*Dafila acuta*).—In wet years a considerable number of pintails remain to nest in the marismas of Guadalquivir, and by August the broods (together with those of garganey, marbled duck, etc.) assemble on the only waters that then remain—such as the Lagunas de Santolalla, etc.

In 1908, a very wet spring, almost as many pintails bred here as mallards, and in eight nests observed the maximum number of eggs was nine. They

[1] One such note may be given as an example :—

"1903.—Examined 40 geese shot January 1 and 2. Legs varied from white and pale flesh-colour to pale yellowish and pink, adults all of the latter colour. Beaks vary from whitish or flesh-colour, through yellow, up to bright orange. A few of the geese, mostly the smaller, young birds, were nearly pure white below; others heavily spotted or barred with black: nearly all (old and young) show signs of a 'white-front.'"

resemble those of mallards, consisting of twigs with a few feathers placed on the mud, and easily seen through the open clump of samphire which shelters them.[1]

Mallard (*Anas boschas*), in the marisma, nest in precisely similar situations, but their eggs number twelve or fourteen. Elsewhere their nests (being among bush or reedbeds) are less easily seen.

Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*) never breed, though chance birds (and some greylags also) remain every summer—possibly wounded.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) do not nest in the open marisma, but many pairs retire to the rush-fringed inland lagoons, such as Zopiton and Santolalla. They lay nine to twelve eggs about mid-May, usually at a short distance from the water.

Teal (*Nettion crecca*) remain quite exceptionally. Even in that wet spring, 1908, only a single nest was found. There were eight eggs laid on bare mud, with hardly any nest, beneath a samphire bush. Though quite fresh, and placed at once under a hen, these eggs did not hatch.

Garganey (*Querquedula circia*) breed among the samphire in the open marisma—in wet seasons quite numerously. Seven young, caught newly hatched in 1908 and kept alive at Jerez, showed no distinctive sexual coloration all that autumn or up to February 1909. Early in March three drakes became distinguishable, the most advanced being complete in feather by the 15th, and all three perfect by April 1.

Young pintails, on the other hand, acquire complete sexual dress in the autumn, as mallards do, by November.

Garganey also nest in large numbers on the lagoons of Daimiel in La Mancha.

Marbled Duck (*Querquedula angustirostris*).—This is one of the most abundant of the Spanish-breeding ducks, nesting both in the marisma and along the various channels of the Guadalquivir. Their nests, substantially built of twigs of samphire, dead reeds, and grass, lined with down, are carefully concealed among covert, usually on dry ground. Some are approached by a sort of tunnel. Exceptionally we have seen a nest built a foot high in the branches of a samphire bush with a clear space beneath, and overhanging shallow water. The eggs, laid at the end of May, vary from twelve to fourteen, and in one instance twenty—possibly the produce of two females. We find these the most difficult of all the ducks to rear in confinement. Probably their food is quite different, anyway they are very bad eating.

Marbled ducks are unknown at Daimiel.

Shovelers (*Spatula clypeata*) only breed exceptionally and in wet seasons; we found one nest at Las Nuevas in 1908. Though abundant in winter, does not breed at Daimiel.

Ferruginous Ducks (*Fuligula nyroca*), like all the diving tribe, breed only on deep and permanent lakes, such as those of Medina and Daimiel, where they abound all summer. None nest in the marisma, which in summer is largely dry. Nests, mid-May; eggs, nine or ten.

[1] In Jutland we found some pintails' nests rather cunningly concealed in holes upon open grassy islets in marine lagoons not unlike our Spanish marismas; others were on bare ground, though occasionally hidden among thistles. Here also the eggs numbered eight or nine. See *Ibis*, 1894, p. 349.

POCHARD (*Fuligula ferina*).—Though we have not found it ourselves, one of our fowlers (Machachado) tells us that pochards breed on the lakes, and even more in Las Nuevas, laying but few eggs—five to seven.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD (*Fuligula rufila*).—This is the characteristic breeding-duck at Daimiel in La Mancha, as well as on the Albufera of Valencia, at both of which points it abounds. Yet curiously it is all but unknown on the Baetican marismas. Among the thousands of ducks we have shot therein, but a single example of the red crested pochard figures—a female killed January 19, 1903.

TUFTED DUCK (*Fuligula cristata*).—None remain, though abundant in winter.

WHITE-FACED DUCK (*Erismatura leucocephala*).—This species, known as *Bamboléta* or *Malvasía*, arrives in spring and breeds commonly on every deep pool and reed-girt lagoon in Andalucia.

SHELDUCKS (*Tadorna cornuta*), we are assured (though this we have not proved), breed in the marisma in hollows (*hoyos*)—such as the cavernous foot-prints made by cattle in the soft mud in winter. Common in dry winters.

RUDDY SHELDUCK (*Tadorna casarca*). These are seen here all summer, yet we have failed to discover their breeding places. They are common, old and young, on the Laguna de Medina in August and September. This is a striking species of stately flight and clear toned ringing cry—*Hāā-ōō*—thrice repeated.

WAGTAILS

PIED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla lugubris*).—This familiar British species occurs rarely in S. Spain—we have but four records, all in winter. In the reverse, the WHITE WAGTAIL (*M. alba*) abounds—ploughed lands sometimes look *grey* with it; and it is here, in winter, as tame and familiar as one sees it in Norway and Iceland in summer. Yet midway between the two, *i.e.* in the British Isles, we have seen it but thrice! There it may indeed be termed a "rare bird." The explanation seems to be that (like the two southern wheatears) these two wagtails are not specifically distinct, but merely a dimorphic form. This year (June 1910) we found the white wagtail breeding commonly in North Estremadura.

During a northerly hurricane on February 7, 1903, we observed an assemblage of many hundreds of white wagtails on the barren sand-dunes of Majada Real—a second crowd, as numerous, a mile away. Both were migrating bands arrested by the gale. This is merely one example out of scores that have come under our notice of the magical apparition of birds from the clouds, caused by a sudden change of wind. Specially notable, besides wagtails, are swallows, wheatears, pipits and larks.

The GREY WAGTAIL (*M. melanope*), though occasionally seen in winter, is most conspicuous about mid-February, when it passes several days on our lawn at Jerez. It has not then acquired the black throat of spring; but two months later we have found it nesting on mountain-burns of the sierras—precisely such situations as it frequents among the Northumbrian moors.

The YELLOW WAGTAIL (*M. flava*; the Continental form, *cinereocapilla*) appears on the lawn a week or so after the grey species has disappeared: but this remains throughout the spring, nesting in wet meadows and marshes, laying during the last week of April.

The British form (*M. vaii*) also occurs during spring, but rarely and on passage only, none remaining to nest.

Restricted Distribution

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*).—There is a certain limited stretch—say a league or so, on the foreshores of the marisma—whither each winter come a few scores of rooks. At that one spot, and nowhere else within our knowledge, are rooks to be found in southern Spain.

Magpie (*Pica caudata*).—On the western bank of Guadalquivír this bird abounds to a degree we have seen surpassed nowhere else on earth. But cross that river, and never another magpie will you see for a hundred miles to the eastward. For it the lower Bætis marks a frontier. Over the rest of Spain its distribution is normal and regular.

A similar remark would almost hold good of the Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*).

The Azure-winged Magpie (*Cyanopica cooki*) abounds in central Spain and in the Sierra Moréna. But its southern range stops dead at the little village of Coria del Rio just below Sevilla. 'Tis but a few miles beyond, yet in Doñana we have never seen so much as a straggler. The Azure-wing does not straggle.

From Spain (as elsewhere stated) you must travel to China and Japan ere you see another azure-winged magpie.

Jays (*Garrulus glandarius*) in Spain confine themselves to mountain-forests, eschewing the lowland woods which in other lands form their home.

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